

Gorki's "Children of the Sun" Complete

Poet Lore

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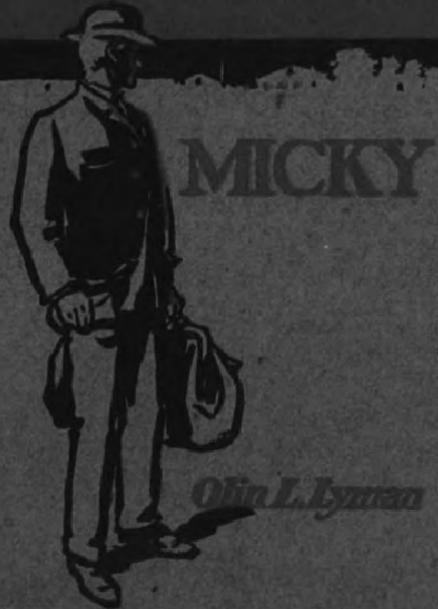
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Poet Lore

VOLUME XVII

SUMMER 1906

NUMBER II

THE CHILDREN OF THE SUN

BY MAXIM GORKI

Translated from the Russian by Archibald John Wolfe

CHARACTERS:

PAVEL FEODOROVITCH PROTASSOFF, *a scientist.*
LISA (ELISAVETA FEODOROVNA), PAVEL's *sister.*
ELENA NICOLAIEVNA, PAVEL's *wife.*
DIMITRI SERGHEIEVITCH VAGHIN, *an artist.*
BORIS NICOLAIEVITCH TCHEPURNY, *a veterinary surgeon.*
MELANIE NICOLAIEVNA, *sister of Boris, a widow.*
NAZAR AVDEIEVITCH, *landlord.*
MISHA, NAZAR's *son.*
YEGOR, *a locksmith.*
AVDOTIA, YEGOR's *wife.*
YAKOV TROSHIN.
ANTONOVNA, *an old nurse.*
FIMA, *a servant.*
LUSHA, *another servant.*
ROMAN, *a porter.*
A Physician.

ACT I

AN OLD country gentleman's residence; a large room plunged into semi-darkness; to the left a window and a door leading out on a porch; in the corner a stairway to LISA's apartments; in the background a passage into the dining-room; in the right corner a door into ELENA's rooms; bookcases, old-fashioned, cumbersome furniture; books in de luxe binding scattered on tables; portraits of scientists on the walls; somebody's bust glistening on top of a wardrobe; seated at a large, round table near the window on the left, PROTASSOFF is seen turning over the leaves of a pamphlet

I

and carefully watching a test tube containing some fluid, which he is heating over an alcohol lamp. On the porch, just outside of the window, ROMAN is engaged in some carpenter's work, droning a monotonous singsong, which evidently annoys PROTASSOFF.

Protassoff. I say, porter!

Roman (peeping in through the window). Sir?

Protassoff. Won't you please go away?

Roman. Where shall I go?

Protassoff. Anywhere; you disturb me.

Roman. The landlord, sir.... Told me to finish the job.

Antonovna (entering from the dining-room). You untidy fellow! You are here now, are you?

Protassoff. Be still, old woman!

Antonovna. Why don't you stay in your own apartments? Is there not room enough for you there?

Protassoff. You had better keep out of my rooms. They are full of smoke.

Antonovna. You are in a fair way to fill this room with smoke, too. Just let me open the door.

Protassoff (bastily). No, no, don't! You old fidget! I did not ask you to open the door, did I? You might do better to coax this porter to go away. Just listen to his howling.

Antonovna (through the window). Why are you fooling around here? Go away!

Roman. How can I? The landlord's orders.

Antonovna. Never mind, go away, you'll finish up later.

Roman. All right, then. (Goes noisily.)

Antonovna (grumbling). Take my word, you'll suffocate here some day! And with the cholera coming on, too! The idea of a general's son wasting his time with such rubbish. And what does it all amount to? Nothing but disagreeable odors.

Protassoff. You just wait, granny, I might live to be a general, too.

Antonovna. You'll be a beggar. You've lost your house with chemicals and physistry.

Protassoff. You mean physics and chemistry. Won't you please leave me alone, old lady?

Antonovna. That fellow Yegor is here.

Protassoff. Tell him to come in.

Antonovna. Talk to that brute, Pavel, talk to him! He was beating his wife again last night.

Protassoff. All right, all right, I shall talk to him. (*Lisa quietly comes down the stairway, stops before the wardrobe and noiselessly opens it.*)

Antonovna. But you must threaten him. Tell him so and so!

Protassoff. Leave it to me, I shall scare him. Don't worry, old woman, I shall. Go.

Antonovna. You have to be stern with him. You talk to people like to gentlefolk.

Protassoff. Hush, old woman, it's enough. Is Elena at home?

Antonovna. No, not yet. First thing after breakfast off to Vaghin's and hasn't come back since. Look out, you'll be losing your wife next.

Protassoff. Don't talk nonsense, nurse, you will make me angry.

Lisa. Nurse, you are disturbing Pavel in his work.

Protassoff. Ah! Are you here? What is the good news?

Lisa. Nothing.

Antonovna. Time you took your milk, Lisa.

Lisa. I know.

Antonovna. And as for Elena Nicolaievna, I am bold to say that I would in her place start a love affair with somebody on purpose. Did you ever see such indifference to a wife? Just like the proverb goes. Done with your broth, break the dish to pieces. And being without children, let me ask what pleasure can the poor woman have? Do you blame her if....

Protassoff. Old woman, I begin to get angry in earnest. Off with you. Such a sticker!

Antonovna. All right, all right, you hotheaded fellow. Don't forget about Yegor (*On her way out of the room*). The milk is on the table, Lisa, waiting for you. And how about your medicine, did you take it?

Lisa. Yes, yes.

Antonovna. Good. (*Exit into the dining-room.*)

Protassoff (*Looking around*). A remarkable old woman! Immortally stupid, and such a nuisance! How is your health, Lisa?

Lisa. All right.

Protassoff. This is wonderfully good news. (*Humming*) Wonderfully good. Wonderfully good.

Lisa. Nurse is right, though.

Protassoff. I doubt it. Old people are seldom right. To be right is the prerogative of the newborn. Look here, Lisa, I have here common yeast....

Lisa. Nurse is right when she states that you are wanting in attention to Elena.

THE CHILDREN OF THE SUN

Protassoff (Visibly hurt, but speaking gently). How you annoy me, you and the nurse. Is Lena dumb? She could tell me this herself, if such were the case. If there were anything... If I... But she does not say a word. Where, then, is the trouble? (YEGOR enters from the dining-room: he is slightly intoxicated.) Ah, here is Yegor. How do you do, Yegor?

Yegor. Long health to you, sir!

Protassoff. Look here, Yegor, I need a little furnace, with a lid, a coneshaped lid, with a little round hole in the center of the lid, to insert a chimney. Do you understand?

Yegor. Yes, sir. Can be done.

Protassoff. I have a sketch here to go by. Where is it? Come with me. (He leads YEGOR into the dining-room. TCHEPURNE is heard knocking at the door on the porch. LISA admits him.)

Tchepurny. At home? Good morning!

Lisa. How do you do?

Tchepurny (Sniffing). And judging from the odor my learned friend is also at home.

Lisa. From where do you come?

Tchepurny. Straight from a professional visit. The pet dog of the Chief of the Department's wife met with a distressing accident, having had its tail jammed in the door through the carelessness of a parlor maid. I was called upon to treat the canine appendage, for which I received a fee of three rubles. Here is the very bill. I had intended to bring you some candy, but I was not sure if it would be proper to present you anything bought with dog money, and refrained.

Lisa. You showed great discretion. Please sit down.

Tchepurny. I cannot say that this brew emits a particularly agreeable odor. Hello, colleague Protassoff, it is boiling!

Protassoff (Comes running). It did not have to boil. How annoying! Why did you not warn me, people?

Tchepurny. Did I not tell you it was boiling?

Protassoff (Petulantly). But understand I did not want it to boil at all.

(YEGOR enters.)

Lisa. How were we to know this, Pavel?

Protassoff (Grumbling). The devil! Have to do it all over again!

Yegor. Pavel Feodorovitch, will you please give me a ruble?

Protassoff. A ruble? At once. (Searches in all his pockets). Have you any money, Lisa?

Lisa. No, I haven't, but nurse keeps some.

Tchepurny. I have some too. Here is a three ruble bill.

Protassoff. A three? Give it me, please. Here, Yegor, a three, do you mind?

Yegor. A three will do just as well. We'll get square. Thank you, sir. Good-bye.

Lisa. Pavel, you had something to say to Yegor, didn't you? Nurse was speaking to you about something.

Protassoff. Something to say? Ah, I remember. Yegor, sit down, please. Perhaps you will talk to him yourself, Lisa? (*Lisa shakes her head.*) You see, Yegor, I have to tell you. In other words nurse asked me. The fact of the matter is, it appears that you beat your wife. Pardon me, Yegor..

Yegor (*rising from the chair*). I do beat her.

Protassoff. You do? But don't you know it is hardly right, I assure you.

Yegor (*Sullenly*). Who said it was?

Protassoff. You understand then? Then why fight? It is brutal. Yegor, you must stop this. You are a human being, you are a rational creature, you are the most enlightened and most beautiful phenomenon on earth..

Yegor. I am? (*Grins.*)

Protassoff. Of course.

Yegor. Why don't you ask first why I beat her, sir?

Protassoff. But don't you comprehend: You should not beat her at all. One human being should not beat another. It is so perfectly clear, Yegor.

Yegor (*With a sarcastic smile.*) I was beaten too, lots of times. And as for my wife, she is not a human being, she is a devil.

Protassoff. What rubbish! What is a devil?

Yegor (*Determinedly*). Good-bye, sir. And as for beating, I shall beat her until she is as humble before me as grass is before the wind. (*Exit through the dining room.*)

Protassoff. But listen, Yegor, did you not agree yourself... He is gone. And he felt offended, apparently, too. How silly the whole scene was. That nurse! She will always concoct something absurd. (*Disappears behind the portieres.*)

Tchepurny. My learned friend spoke very convincingly.

Lisa. Dear Pavel, he is always... so ridiculous.

Tchepurny. I should have tried a club on friend Yegor.

Lisa. Boris Nicolaievitch!

Tchepurny. Why not? Pardon me if I speak rudely. But his reasoning is correct: he was beaten, ergo he may beat. And I continue for him: ergo he ought to be beaten again.

Lisa. I beg of you.. Why talk like this, why?

Tchepurny. Upon such reasoning rests the entire system of our punitive legislation.

Lisa. You know how I hate, how I fear all that is unrefined, and it seems as if you intentionally tease me. Wait.. This locksmith.. he evokes in me a feeling of dread. He is so.... dark, and has such large, injured looking eyes. I fancy I had seen them in the past.. there in that mob..

Tchepurny. Don't remind yourself of that. Let that incident rest..

Lisa. Can such things be forgotten?

Tchepurny. What is the use?

Lisa. Where blood was shed, flowers will never bloom.

Tchepurny. Yes they will, lots of them.

Lisa (*Rises and paces the floor*). Only hatred will grow there. When I hear anything rude, anything crass, when I see the color of red, there revives again in my heart a feeling of sickening horror, and immediately there rises before my eyes a black savage mob, bloodstained faces, pools of warm red blood in the sand..

Tchepurny. Please don't, you will talk yourself into a paroxysm.

Lisa. At my feet lies a youth with a broken head. He is crawling somewhere. Blood is coursing down his cheek and his neck. He raises his head to heaven, and I see his filmy eyes, his open mouth and blood-stained teeth. Then his head sinks face downward.. into the sand.

Tchepurny (*Approaching LISA*). Heavens, what will I do with you?

Lisa. Does this not appall you?

Tchepurny. Let us go into the garden.

Lisa. But tell me, tell me, is my horror intelligible to you?

Tchepurny. Of course, I understand it.. I feel.

Lisa. No, it is not true. If you truly understood me, I would feel relieved. I long to throw off a portion of the burden of my soul, and I find no other soul willing to take it.

Tchepurny. Please stop, there's a good girl. Let us go into the garden. What an abominable odor. Like an old rubber shoe fried in olive oil.

Lisa. Yes, the odor is strong.. I feel dizzy.

Antonovna (*Enters from the dining room*). Lisa, time to take your drops. And you have not had your milk yet.

Lisa (*Exit into the dining room*). I am coming.

Tchepurny. Well, how is Antonovna?

Antonovna (Tidying the table). So, so. No complaints.

Tchepurny. Good. And how is your health?

Antonovna. Praise the Lord.

Tchepurny. What a pity. I would so much like to treat you.

Antonovna. You better stick to pups. I am not a dog.

Tchepurny. And I would like to try my hand at curing some good human being.

Lisa. Let us go. (Go out on the porch. PROTASSOFF enters with a test tube in his hand.)

Protassoff. Nurse, give me some boiling water.

Antonovna. I haven't any.

Protassoff. Please, nurse, do.

Antonovna. Wait till the tea urn boils. Did you speak to Yegor?

Protassoff. That I did.

Antonovna. Did you talk to him strictly?

Protassoff. Very. He fairly shook in his boots. I say to him, I say, I shall take you before the...what's his name?

Antonovna. Chief of police?

Protassoff. No, but that's just the same. Yes, before the justice of the peace.

Antonovna. You should have scared him with the chief of police. How did he take it?

Protassoff. He? Why do you know, he said to me: 'You're an ass, sir!'

Antonovna (Indignantly). He did?

Protassoff. He certainly did. 'You're an ass, sir,' he says, for sticking your nose in other people's affairs.

Antonovna. Did he really say that to you. Did he, Pavel?

Protassoff (Laughing). No, no, granny. He did not say so, but I do. He merely thought so, but I put it into words.

Antonovna. Shame on you! (Attempts to go out, pouting.)

Protassoff. You better bring me some boiling water, and do it yourself. Fima is too flighty and manages to upset something with her skirts every time.

Antonovna. Fima? The hussy, she is starting a love affair with the landlord's son, I think.

Protassoff. Do you feel envious?

Antonovna. Fie! You are her master, you must tell her that it is not a proper thing to do.

Protassoff. You better leave me out, nurse. You would have me go about all day telling people what they should and what they should not do. Don't you understand that it is none of my business?

Antonovna. And what is your education for? Your learning? (MELANIE appears in the porch door.)

Protassoff. Go, now. Ah, Melanie Nicolaievna! How do you do!

Melanie. Good morning, Pavel Feodorovitch!

Antonovna. Whoever left the door open? (Shuts the door.)

Melanie. How contented you look!

Protassoff. I am glad you came. Nurse is worrying me to death. A very important experiment was crowned with success today.

Melanie. Indeed? I am so glad. I do so wish to see you famous.

Antonovna (Exit grumbling). Famous enough now. The whole town is talking about him.

Melanie. I am convinced that you will be something like Pasteur.

Protassoff. That is a matter of no consequence. You must not pronounce it 'Pastoore,' however. Do I see my book in your hands? Have you read it? Don't you think that is more interesting than a novel?

Melanie. Vastly more so. But these odd signs here...

Protassoff. Formulas?

Melanie. I don't understand formulas.

Protassoff. These things must be learned. I shall now give you a treatise on the physiology of plants. But above all and more earnestly than all study chemistry. It is a wonderful science. Compared with some others it has not advanced very far, but even now it appears to me like some allseeing eye, whose bold and searching glance penetrates into the fiery depths of the sun and into the dark crevices of the earth, into the invisible particles of your heart (MELANIE sighs), into the mysteries of stony formations and into the wordless life of a tree. It scrutinizes all, and discovering harmony in all, stubbornly seeks the beginnings of life. And it will find them, it will find them. Having mastered the secrets of matter, it will create in a test tube a living substance.

Melanie (Ecstatically). Why don't you hold public lectures?

Protassoff (In confusion). What for?

Melanie. You must lecture. You speak so delightfully. When I listen to you I feel an impulse to kiss your hands.

Protassoff (looking at his hands). I should not advise you to. My hands are rarely immaculate, you know. Handling all sorts of stuff.

Melanie (sincerely). How I should like to do something for you! If

you but knew! You charm me so. You are not of the earth, earthy, you are so sublime. Tell me what you need. Ask all, all.

Protassoff. But you really could...

Melanie. Could what? Tell me, pray!

Protassoff. Do you keep hens?

Melanie. Hens? What sort of hens?

Protassoff. The domestic fowl, you know. Plain, ordinary hens, consorts of roosters, chickens.

Melanie. I understand, but why hens?

Protassoff. Dear friend, could you supply me daily with fresh eggs? Strictly fresh, barely brought into the world, still warm? You see, I require so much albumen, but nurse is stingy, she does not understand anything about albumen, and plays off stale eggs on me. And I have to talk and talk and she looks so cross.

Melanie. Pavel Feodorovitch, how cruel you are!

Protassoff. I, cruel? How so?

Melanie. Very well, I shall send you a dozen fresh eggs every morning.

Protassoff. Magnificent! It will help me out wonderfully. And I am deeply grateful to you. You are a dear, I assure you.

Melanie. And you are a child, a cruel, overgrown child. And you don't understand anything.

Protassoff (Surprised). I certainly do not understand why I am cruel.

Melanie. Some day you will understand. Is Elena Nicolaievna out?

Protassoff. She has gone to Vaghin for a sitting.

Melanie. Do you like him?

Protassoff. Vaghin? Yes. Why, we are old school chums, friends at high school and college. (*Looks at his watch.*) He took up a science course at first, but gave it up for the academy of arts after a year's course.

Melanie. Elena Nicolaievna seems to like him too?

Protassoff. Very much, I think. He is a fine fellow, although slightly one-sided.

Melanie. Are you not afraid...

(TCHEPURNY knocking at the porch door.)

Protassoff (Opening the door). Afraid of what?...Nurse, shut this door.

Melanie. You here?

Tchepurny. You here already? Have you any water? Elisaveta Feodorovna asks for water..

Protassoff. Is she ill?

Tchepurny. No, no, she wants some water for her medicine. (*Disappears into the dining room.*)

Protassoff. Melanie Nicolaievna, with your permission I shall leave you for a moment. I must look after..

Melanie. Please go, but do come back soon.

Protassoff. I shall. But you might step out into the garden.

Melanie. Very good.

Protassoff. Lisa is there. Nurse, how about my boiling water? (*Exit.*)

Tchepurny (Enters). Well, Melanie, how is business?

Melanie (In a burried whisper). Do you know what is hydro-pyro-morphism?

Tchepurny. What?

Melanie. Hydro-pyro-morphism?

Tchepurny. That's a poser. Sounds to me like aquatic fireworks.

Melanie. You don't mean it.

Tchepurny. That's what it is. Hydro—water; pyro—fire; morphism same as metamorphosis and that is a magic trick, you know. Does he quiz you?

Melanie. None of your business. Go your way.

Tchepurny. If you win him away from his wife start a soap factory. You will have a chemist working for his keep. (*Exit.*)

Melanie. How rude you are, Boris. (*Rises and looks around.* *FIMA* enters.)

Fima. Elisaveta Feodorovna asks you to please step out into the garden.

Melanie. Very good. (*ANTONOVNA* passes through with a pot of boiling water. *FIMA* is heard handling the dishes very noisily in the dining room.) What have you there, nurse?

Antonovna. Boiling water for Pavel.

Melanie. Ah, for experiments?

Antonovna. Yes, ma'am, always for those. (*Exit.*)

Melanie (peeping into the dining room). Fima!

Fima. Yes, ma'am?

Melanie. Does your mistress go every day to the artist?

Fima. To Mr. Vaghin's? Excepting when it rains or is threatening. Then Mr. Vaghin comes here.

Melanie (*Draws nearer to FIMA*). You're a bright girl, Fima...
Fima. I'm not a fool.
Melanie. Well if you notice anything between them, tell me, do you understand?
Fima. I understand.
Melanie. And hold your tongue about this. There. You won't find me stingy.
Fima. Thank you, ma'am! He kisses her hands.
Melanie. That's nothing. Keep your eyes open.
Fima. I will. I understand.
Melanie. I am going into the garden. If Pavel Feodorovitch comes out, call me. (*Exit.*)
Fima. Very well, ma'am. (*ANTONOVNA enters.*)
Antonovna. Don't bang those dishes like that. They're not made of iron. You'll break them.
Fima. Don't I know how to handle dishes?
Antonovna. No back talk now. What did that tradesman's widow ask you about?
Fima (*going into the dining room*). Inquired about Elisaveta Feodorovna's health.
Antonovna (*Following her*). Why doesn't she go and see for herself instead of asking the servants...
(*NAZAR AVDEIEFF enters from the porch, takes off his cap, looks around, sighs, examines the wallpaper with his fingers, coughs.*)
Fima (*In the dining room*). She's gone there, hasn't she? And what's the matter with servants? Aren't they human beings too? You're a servant too...
Antonovna. I know who I am. But born gentlefolks don't hold conversations with servants. They give orders and that's all. Nowadays, though, everybody is trying to get into society, but as for manners, they're pretty low. Who's that?
Nazar. Long health to you, nurse.
Antonovna. What is it?
Nazar. I have business with Pavel Feodorovitch. Would like to have a talk with him.
Antonovna. All right, I shall call him. (*Exit.*)
Fima (*Peeping in*). Respectful compliments. Ah, you wicked flirt. Please keep your hands to yourself.
Nazar. Won't you honor a respectable widower? Drop in for a cup of tea in the evening.

Fima. Hush..(Enters PROTASSOFF, followed by ANTONOVNA).

Protassoff. You wish to see me?

Nazar. Yes, sir.

Protassoff. Well, what is it?

Nazar. With regard to the rent, sir...

Protassoff (With irritation). Look here, when I sold you this house I had to wait two years for the money. And you..When is it due?

Nazar. It was due yesterday, sir.

Protassoff. The idea. This is hardly delicate. I am engaged and you intrude with such trifles.

Nazar. As a matter of fact it was not about the rent, sir. I merely mentioned it by the way, just to remind myself.

Protassoff. You better remind nurse or my wife. There is money somewhere around here. The devil knows where it is. In some safe. My wife will send it. Or nurse might take it over to you. Good-bye.

Nazar. May I detain you, sir?

Protassoff. What for? What is the trouble?

Nazar. With regard to your country cottage and land.

Protassoff. Well?

Nazar. Why don't you sell it?

Protassoff. Where is the darned fool to buy it? The land is not worth a rap. Nothing but sand and firs.

Nazar (With inspiration). This is gospel truth. The land is perfectly worthless.

Protassoff. There you are!

Nazar. Nobody but I will ever buy it.

Protassoff. And what do you want with it?

Nazar. Just to bunch it, sir! I bought your neighbor's land and ought to have your tract.

Protassoff. All right then, go ahead and buy it. You are growing rich, aren't you?

Nazar. Well, not to say rich, I am expanding, sir.

Protassoff. You are an odd chap. What will you do with all this sand?

Nazar. Well, sir, my son graduated from a business college, and is now a very educated lad. He is very smart with regard to industry. Well, sir, I have conceived the idea of promoting the industries of our fatherland and intend to start a factory for making beer bottles.

(FIMA listening in the door.)

Protassoff (Laughing). To be sure, you are a funny fellow. And how about your pawn shop? Will you close that?

Nazar. Why should I? A pawn shop is something for the soul, sir! It is a benevolent enterprise. Helping my neighbor.

Protassoff (Laughing.) It is? Well, go ahead and buy my land. Good-bye. (*Exit, laughing.*)

Nazar. But permit me, sir. Ahem! He's gone, Fima. How was that? It takes two to make a bargain, and he has gone and left me.

Fima (Shrugging her shoulders). Don't you know he's not in his right mind?

Nazar. Ahem! Very irregular! Well, good-day.

Roman (Suddenly appearing behind FIMA). Where's the smoky fireplace?

Fima. Drat you! What do you want?

Roman. Don't get scared. I was told about a smoky fireplace.

Misha (Comes running out of the dining room). Not here, you dolt, in the kitchen.

Roman. I thought it was here. (*Exit.*)

Misha (Rapidly). Say, Fima, how about it? Free room and 15 rubles per month, agreed?

Fima. Go away, you reprobate. Do you think you are buying a horse?

Misha. What's the use of beating about the bush? I am a business man. Just think of your choice of a husband. You might marry some mechanic, like that locksmith, and he will beat you. I will fix you up modestly, but neatly, with lots to eat, and will even try to educate you.

Fima. Go away. I am an honest girl, and besides Khrapoff, the butcher, offers me 100 rubles a month.

Misha. But consider, you fool, he is old.

Fima. Well, I didn't accept.

Misha. There you are, silly, but I...

Fima. Give me 75.

Misha. Wha-a-t? Seventy-five?

Fima. And a promissory note for the whole amount for a year in advance.

Misha (In astonishment). I say...

Fima. Yes, sir! (*Exchange a meaning glance, as YEGOR enters from the porch. He is much the worse for drink.*) Hush.. Your father has left here, sir.

Misha. He has? I beg your pardon.

Fima. Where are you going? Couldn't you come through the kitchen? The landlord uses the back stairs, and you might too...

Yegor. Shut up! Call your master.

Fima. You are drunk too, into the bargain. How will the master speak to you in this condition?

Yegor. None of your business. Call him. I shall do the talking, and not your master. Go!

Fima (Running into the dining room). Nurse! Nu-u-u-rse!

Protassoff (Enters from behind the portieres). What is all this noise about, Fima? Ah, is it you, Yegor? What's the matter? Be brief, please. I am busy.

Yegor. Wait, sir. I am slightly under the liquor. I can't talk when I am sober.

Protassoff. Never mind. What is the matter? (ANTONOVNA enters, followed by FIMA.)

Yegor. A while ago you insulted me before people. Started to talk to me about my wife. Who are you to offend me?

Protassoff. There, old woman! Do you see your work? Yegor, I had no desire to offend you.

Yegor. But wait. Offense and insults have been my lot since I was a boy.

Protassoff. I understand you, Yegor, that's so.

Yegor. Hold on! Nobody loves me, nobody understands me. Even my wife does not love me. But I want to be loved, the devil take you all!

Protassoff. Don't shout.

Antonovna. You drunken brute.

Yegor. Am I or am I not a human being? Why do all insult me?

Antonovna. Heavens, what scandal! (Runs into the dining room. Her shouts are heard from the yard.)

Protassoff. Calm yourself, Yegor. Don't you see the nurse told me..

Yegor. Get rid of the nurse. You are a man with a beard. A nurse is not a law to a bearded man. Listen to me. I have reverence for you. I see that you are a peculiar man, I feel it. And that's why it hurts worse if you insult me before people. You..Say the word and I shall go down on my knees before you. Face to face—and I am not offended. But before the cattle doctor..And as for my wife I'll thrash her. I'll cripple her. I love her and she must..

(TCHEPURNY, MELANIE, LISA, ANTONOVNA, FIMA, come rushing in.)

Lisa. What is the matter, Pavel? What is it?

Tchepurny (Restraining LISA). What is this all about?

Protassoff. I beg of you, good people..

Melanie. Nurse, call the porter.

Antonovna (*Exit, shouting*). Roman!

Yegor. Look at the crows! Scat! Scare them off, Pavel Feodorovitch!

Tchepurny. You had better take a walk home, my good man, hadn't you?

Yegor. I am not a good man.

Tchepurny (*Frowning*). Nevertheless go home.

Melanie. A policeman should be sent for.

Protassoff. Nothing of the sort, please. I say, Yegor, you better go, a little later I shall come and see you myself.

(*ANTONOVNA* and *ROMAN* appear in the doorway.)

Yegor. Will you, though?

Protassoff. I will.

Yegor. All right, then.. See that you do. No fake?

Protassoff. I give you my word.

Yegor. Very well. Good-bye. But all these people are like the dust compared with you. Good-bye. (*Exit*.)

Roman. I am not wanted, I see.

Protassoff. No, you may go. Whew! Do you see, old woman?

(*ANTONOVNA* sighs). See what you have done?

Lisa. I fear this man, I fear him.

Melanie. You are entirely too punctilious with such people, Pavel Feodorovitch.

Protassoff. But I am really guilty before him.

Lisa. You better engage another locksmith.

Tchepurny. All these mechanics are drunkards.

Protassoff. How this grates on my nerves and wearies me! I am unlucky to-day. All sorts of stupid trifles interfere with me. I am working on a very complicated experiment with hydrocyanic acid, and here.. Pour me some tea, Lisa.

Lisa. I shall have tea served here. You don't like the dining room.

Protassoff. Very good. I really don't like those dark rooms, and there is not a light room in the house.

Melanie. I understand you, Pavel Feodorovitch.

Tchepurny. Melanie, what word was that?

Melanie. What do you mean?

Tchepurny. The word you asked me to explain a few minutes ago.

Melanie. I did not ask you anything.

Tchepurny. Can't you remember? Well, well! Do you know,

colleague, when she hears an outlandish word from your lips, she always asks me to explain its meaning.

Melanie (angrily). You are terrible, Boris. I have a poor memory for foreign words. Is it something to laugh at?

(*FIMA arranges the table for tea and brings in the paraphernalia.*)

Protassoff. What did you want to know?

Melanie (Guiltily). I forgot the meaning of hydro-pyro-morphism. . .

Tchepurny. And I interpreted the word as 'aquatic fireworks.'

Protassoff (Roaring). Wha-a-at?

(*LISA enters and busies herself with the tea.*)

Melanie. For shame, Boris!

Protassoff (Smiling). Your relations are rather queer. It looks as if you were so antagonistic. . . Pardon me, perhaps I speak rather tactlessly?

Melanie. Not at all. Boris does not like me. We are almost strangers. He was brought up by an aunt at Poltava, and I by an uncle in Yaroslavl. We were orphans.

Tchepurny. From Kazan.

Melanie. We met as adults and we did not like one another. Boris does not like anybody. He thinks that life is a failure and he blames everybody else for it. He never even visits me.

Tchepurny. Why, you know, when her aged husband was alive, he begged me to treat him, whenever I called.

Melanie. What a story!

Tchepurny. And I would reply that I did not treat every kind of beasts.

Lisa. Boris Nicolaievitch!

(*PROTASSOFF smiles sheepishly.*)

Tchepurny. Am I putting it on too thick?

Lisa. Drink your tea!

Tchepurny. And go home? I understand.

Melanie. Pavel Feodorovitch, do you remember you promised to show me some sea-weed under the microscope. . .

Protassoff. Rather a cell of a sea-weed. Well, I can do that. I can show it to you at once, if you wish.

Melanie. Please, do. I shall be delighted.

Protassoff. Come along, then, if you don't mind the odor. . .

Melanie (Following him). Oh, I don't mind.

Tchepurny. What a farce! What does she care for sea-weed, the cow?

Lisa. Boris Nicolaievitch, you are so sincere, simple and strong, but . .

Tchepurny. Strike at once!

Lisa. Why this pretence of rudeness, why this assumption of tiresome, disagreeable cynicism?

Tchepurny. I make no pretence..

Lisa. There is so much in life that is rude and cruel, so much that is horrible. One should be gentler, kinder.

Tchepurny. But why lie? People are rude and cruel, because such is their nature.

Lisa. This is not true.

Tchepurny. Is'it not though? You, too, think so and feel it to be true. Do you not say that the people are like beasts, that they are rude and filthy, that you fear them? I know it, too, and I believe you. But when you say that we should love the people, I do not believe it. It is your fear speaking through you.

Lisa. You do not understand me.

Tchepurny. Possibly not. I comprehend that something which is pleasant or useful may be loved,—a pig, for its lard and ham; music, a lobster or a picture... But as for man, he is useless and disagreeable.

Lisa. Heavens, why speak like this?

Tchepurny. One must speak the truth, just as one feels it. I tried to be kind. I picked up a boy from the street and thought of raising him, but he skipped with my watch. And likewise I took up a girl (from the street, too, you know), quite a young thing she was, and thought after a while I would marry her. But she filled up one day on liquor, and.. broke my face.

Lisa. Stop, don't you realize that such things are not to be spoken of?

Tchepurny. Why not? It would do me good to tell all some day, my whole life,....it might cleanse my soul.

Lisa. You should marry..

Tchepurny. I agree with you there.

Lisa. Find a girl..

Tchepurny (calmly). You know very well I have found one and have for almost two years walked around her like a bear around a bee-hive in a hollow tree.

Lisa. Are you commencing again? Dear Boris Nicolaievitch, please, don't. I gave you my final answer. Nothing will ever change it.

Tchepurny. Who knows? I am a Little-Russian, and they are a stubborn lot. Who knows?

Lisa (Almost terrified). Never!

Tchepurny. Let us change the subject.

Lisa. Your obstinacy frightens me.

Tchepurny. Do not be frightened. Fear nothing.

(A pause. ROMAN is heard grumbling near the porch. LISA startled looks through the window.)

Lisa. Why are you so mean to your sister?

Tchepurny (Coolly). She is a fool and a vulgar one in addition.

Lisa. Heavens!

Tchepurny. I won't do it again, indeed, I won't! Is it not a misfortune to lack finer words on the tip of your tongue? You say she is my sister. What of that? At the age of twenty she married an old man, what for? Then she nearly died with longing and loathing. Once she had attempted to hang herself—and was taken off in the nick of time, and another time she tried poison. Finally he died, and now she is raising old Nick.

Lisa. Perhaps the fault was yours. Why did you not give her your moral support?

Tchepurny. The fault may have been mine, and again it may not.

Lisa. Did she deserve death for that?

Tchepurny. Not for that only. You see, you don't understand why she comes here, but I do.

Lisa. Please don't enlarge on your surmises. Rather think who gave you a right to judge her?

Tchepurny. And who gave you a right to judge people? All the world avails itself of this right without a special dispensation. Man can live without judging as little as without eating.

Melanie (Enters greatly agitated, followed by PROTASSOFF). Pavel Feodorovitch, I understand, but is it all true?

Protassoff. It certainly is. All is endowed with life; life is everywhere. And mystery is everywhere. To move in a world of wonderfully deep secrets of existence, to waste prodigally one's brain force in their solution, herein lies the true life of man, herein is the inexhaustible source of happiness and creative joy. Only in the domain of reason man is truly free, and when he is rational, he is honest and kind. Good is the creation of reason, without consciousness there is no good. (Hastily consults his watch). But you must really pardon me, I must go. Yes, please. The devil! (Exit).

Melanie. If you only could have heard him, how he spoke. He spoke to me, to me alone, yes. No one has ever spoken to me like he. Such marvels. And all to me! (BORIS laughs.) Why, Boris. (With tears.) Do I say that I understood him? I do not. I am a fool. Elisa-

veta Feodorovna, you think me ridiculous. Dear friend, just think. Here one has gone through life as if in a dream. Then some one wakes you, and you open your eyes and see that it is morning and that the sun is shining. And you see nothing at first but a flood of light. And then your soul breathes a sigh, a sigh of pure joy. Just like the mass of the Resurrection morning.

Tchepurny. What's all this?

Lisa. Have some tea, sit down, you are so agitated.

Melanie. You can't understand me, Boris. No thank you, I shall not have any tea. Pardon me, Elisaveta Feodorovna. I must have upset your nerves. I am going, good-bye. You tell him: 'She's gone;' You tell him: 'She's grateful.' Bless your soul, he is so radiant, so wonderful.. (Exit through the porch door.)

Tchepurny. What has happened to her? I don't understand her.

Lisa. I do. There was a time when Pavel affected me like this. When he spoke it was like scales dropping from my eyes. All seemed so simple, so beautiful, so mysterious. All so trifling and so stupendous. And then I had a glimpse of life as it is, full of filth, brutality, senseless cruelty. My soul was filled with terror and wonderment. And then they took me to the sanitarium.

Tchepurny. Do not think of that time. Why talk of the sanitarium —it's a thing of the past.

Lisa. Stop. (ELENA and VAGHIN appear on the porch.)

Tchepurny. Someone is coming. Ah, Elena Nicolaievna.. And the artist. I think it's time for me to go..

Elena. Boris Nicolaievitch, indeed! Is Pavel in his rooms, Lisa? Please give me some tea. (Going to join her husband.)

Tchepurny. Why so pale and wrought up, Dimitri Sergheievitch?

Vagbin. Am I? It's news to me. How are you progressing with your painting, Lisa?

Lisa. I have not practised all day.

Vagbin. More's the pity. Colors act soothingly on the nerves.

Tchepurny. Your looks do not bear out this statement.

Vagbin. Of course, not in every case.

Lisa (With a shudder). Nor is the red color soothing.

Tchepurny. Good-bye. I am going to the river, crabbing. Then I shall cook my crabs, and have a feast with some beer.. I shall have a smoke, too. Please don't trouble to see me to the door, Elisaveta Feodorovna, I shall soon be back.. To-morrow. (ELENA enters.) Good-bye, Elena Nicolaievna.

THE CHILDREN OF THE SUN

Elena. Are you going? Good-bye. (*Exeunt TCHEPURNY and LISA.*)

Vagbin. Is he busy?

Elena. Yes, but he is coming soon.

Vagbin. Always taken up with the absurd idea of creating a homunculus?

Elena. What a tone! For shame!

Vagbin. This futile notion of a pedant's brain irritates me. Nor can I forgive him for his treatment of you. It is monstrous.

Elena. I am on the point of repenting for having confided in you.

Vagbin. You must be free. You must not spare the man who fails to appreciate you.

Elena. I will do so. You shall see.

Vagbin. When? What are you waiting for?

Elena. I am waiting to see what place I occupy in his heart.

Vagbin. None.

Elena (*With a delicate smile.*) If that be so, well and good. Then the solution is simple. I shall go. But if it be not so? If his love is merely dormant, forced into the background by the might of the idea which has seized him? Suppose then that I leave him, and in his heart there will again revive....

Vagbin. And do you wish it to be so? Do you?

Elena. What a tragedy that will be! Can you imagine? I hate tragedies.

Vagbin. Is it for him that you fear?

Elena. I do not wish to hinder him in his life..

Vagbin. You reason, therefore, you do not desire. He who strongly desires, does not reason.

Elena. It is true of beasts. Animals do not reason. Man must reason, and thus lessen the sum total of evil in this world.

Vagbin. A human being must sacrifice himself, etc., etc. Lisa's dyspeptic philosophy has a bad influence upon you.

Elena. Evil is repulsive. Suffering is loathsome. I consider suffering a disgrace for myself, and to cause suffering to others I think is dishonorable and improper.

Vagbin. How sententious you are! But with your lips speaks the soul of a slave. You sacrifice yourself..for whom? For a man who attempts to disintegrate life into minute particles in the stupid endeavor to find its origin. An absurd notion! He is a servant of grim death, not a worshipper of freedom, beauty and joy. And he does not need your sacrifice.

Elena. Calm yourself, my friend. I have not spoken of sacrifice. And I have no reason to have faith in the strength of your sentiments.

Vaghin. Do you not trust in my love?

Elena. Let us say I do not trust myself. (*LISA enters.*)

Vaghin. How cold you are.

Elena. I speak sincerely.

Lisa. Pavel has been disturbed all day long.

Elena. By whom?

Lisa. By everybody—the nurse, the locksmith, the landlord.

Elena. Did he feel annoyed?

Lisa. I think so.

Elena. How disagreeable.

(*VAGHIN goes out on the porch.*)

Lisa. Pardon me, but you really devote too little attention to your husband.

Elena. He has never said so.

Lisa (Rises). Perhaps because it is not pleasant to speak to you. (*Goes upstairs to her apartments.*)

Elena (Gently). Again, Lisa? Lisa, you are wrong. Listen to me... (*LISA does not reply.* *ELENA's glance follows her; she shrugs her shoulders, and with a frown turns to the porch door.* *FIMA enters from the dining room.*)

Fima. Ma'am!

Elena. Well?

Fima. While you were out Melanie Nicolaievna called and said to me...

Elena (absently). Well, what did she say to you?

Fima. I felt ashamed...

Elena. Then you better not repeat it.

Fima. She says, 'Watch your mistress,' meaning you, ma'am.

Elena. What? What nonsense you always invent! Please, go.

Fima. No nonsense, ma'am, my word of honor! She says: 'Watch her and Mr. Vaghin.'

Elena (in a low tone). Leave the room!

Fima. I am not guilty, ma'am. She gave me a ruble, too!

Elena. Leave my presence immediately! (*FIMA hastily disappears.*)

PROTASSOFF comes in from behind the portieres.)

Protassoff. Why shouting, Lena? I see, warring with Fima! A most remarkable girl! She has the queerest skirts, for she always manages to upset or to break something through their instrumentality. I can stay with you about ten minutes. Pour me some tea. And Dimitri? Did he not come with you?

Elena. He is out on the porch.

Protassoff. Is Lisa there?

Elena. Lisa is up in her room.

Protassoff. You don't seem to be in the best of humor?

Elena. I am a little tired.

Protassoff. How is your portrait progressing?

Elena. You ask me the same question every day.

Protassoff. Do I? And here is Dimitri. He, too, looks cross. Why?

Vagbin. Just so. Some day I shall paint your garden, at sunset, just the way it is now.

Protassoff. And the idea ruffles your temper in anticipation?

Vagbin. Was that meant to be bright?

Elena. Will you have some tea?

Protassoff (Rising). You are both in bad humor. I think I shall go into the kitchen. I have there... Some more tea, Elena!

Vagbin. Some of these days he will place you in a huge glass retort, pour some acid over you and watch you to see how you like it.

Elena. Don't talk rubbish, if you do not wish...

Vagbin (Simply and sincerely). I have never been under the sway of a mightier emotion than that of my relation to you. It tortures me, but it also uplifts me.

Elena. Indeed?

Vagbin. I desire to be higher, nobler and brighter than all others before you.

Elena. This is good. I rejoice for your sake.

Vagbin. Elena Nicolaievna, believe me...

Protassoff (Enters from the dining room with a metal vessel in his hands). Leave me in peace, old woman! And why a cook plus husband? Why not hire a cook, husband or no husband? In any event, please leave me alone.

Elena. Nurse, I have so often begged you to...

Protassoff. What a nuisance. Sticks to one like tar. Residue of naphtha! *(Goes back into his rooms.)*

Elena. I have so often begged you not to annoy Pavel.

Antonovna. But listen to me, Elena Nicolaievna, ma'am! Who is the head in this house? Pavel is busy, Lisa is sick, and you are out all day long.

Elena. Pavel must not be disturbed by trifles.

Antonovna. Why don't you look after that?

Elena. I like the idea of being dictated to by you.

Antonovna. Why? If I see that the house is going to wreck and ruin and Pavel is neglected.

Elena (Gently). Nurse, please go away, I beg you.

Antonovna. Very well, ma'am. But the late General's wife, God rest their souls, never chased me out of the room like this. (Exit, pouting. *ELENA* rises and paces the floor nervously. *VAGHIN* regards her with a smile.)

Elena. This seems to amuse you?

Vagbin. A little folly is always amusing. (Ardently). You must leave this house. You were created for beautiful life, for freedom.

Elena (Absentely). Is such life possible, if you are surrounded with people like that? How odd, the larger your calibre the more banality seems to surround you. Like the wind sweeping heaps of rubbish against the walls of a tall building.

(*PROTASSOFF* enters, looking dejected and pale. There is something childlike, helpless and fascinatingly sincere in his appearance. He speaks in a low tone and guiltily.) Why, Pavel, what is the matter with you?

Protassoff. It turned sour on me, do you understand? Yes, it turned sour. And I have been so careful and taken all precautions, too. (Looks at his wife absently, and apparently does not see her. Sits down at the table, takes out a note-book, rapidly draws some figures and becomes engrossed in this occupation. *VAGHIN* shakes *ELENA*'s hand and leaves without a word.)

Elena (In a low tone). Pavel! (A little louder). Dear Pavel! Are you very much annoyed?

Protassoff (With firmly clenched teeth). But why did it turn sour, why?

ACT II

On the right the wall of the house and a broad porch with a railing. Some of the rails are missing. There are two tables on the porch, a large dining table and a smaller one, littered with lotto cards and chips. The back of the porch is covered with an awning.

An old green fence of trellis work runs the entire length of the yard, separating it from the garden. *TCHEPURNY* and *NAZAR AVDEIEVITCH* are seen on the porch and are just turning the corner.

Nazar. There is good hope then?

Tchepurny. There is.

Nazar. Very good. While the mare is not a racer, she has cost money. Seven years ago I paid sixty rubles for her. And think of all the oats she has eaten since. But if she does not mend, tell me and I shall sell her.

Tchepurny. Do you think that she will recover through a change of owners?

Nazar. Then I shall not worry about her. Doctor!

Tchepurny. Well?

Nazar. I have a ticklish favor to ask of you, but don't know how to express myself.

Tchepurny (*Lighting a cigarette*). As briefly as possible.

Nazar. This is reasonable enough. The favor I was going ...

Tchepurny. Cut it shorter still.

Nazar. Is about Mr. Protassoff.

Tchepurny. Indeed?

Nazar. Do you see, my son having studied industrial problems in the business college, says that chemistry is getting to be quite a power. And I see it myself, as for instance : toilet soaps, perfumes, ointments, and such like goods sell well and there is a good profit in them.

Tchepurny. Make it shorter yet. (*MISHA peeps out from behind the corner and TCHEPURNY notices him*.)

Nazar. Can't do it. The idea is too big. Vinegar, for instance, too, and essences of all kinds, and such like. And then I look at a man like Mr. Protassoff and see how he wastes good material and valuable time without any profit. And I reckon that in this manner he will soon run through his estate.

Tchepurny. Do you want me to speak to him about vinegar?

Nazar. On general principles. You emphasize the fact that he will soon be left without money. And I make this proposition to him. I will fit up a factory for him, and he can turn out useful wares. While he has no money to float a company, I am willing to take his notes.

Tchepurny (*Smiling*). How kind you are!

Nazar. I have a kindly heart. I see that a man does not work on a profit-bringing basis, and I itch to put him into business. Besides he is an accomplished gentleman. To his good lady's birthday he got up fireworks the like was never seen. High art, let me tell you! Will you talk to him?

(*FIMA appears on the terrace preparing the tea*.)

Tchepurny. All right.

Nazar. In my opinion you will render him a great service. In the meanwhile, your servant, sir.

Tchepurny. Good-bye. (*To FIMA*). And where is everybody?

Fima. Master is in his rooms, madam in the garden with Mr. Vaghin, and Elisaveta Feodorovna is there too.

Tchepurny. I think I shall join them.

Misha (Rapidly emerging from his hiding place). Pardon me, but I have not the pleasure of knowing your name.

Tchepurny. What of that? I don't know yours.

Misha. I am Michail Nazaroff Vigrusoff. At your service.

Tchepurny. At my service? I don't need you.

Misha (Patronizingly). This is merely a courteous form of speech. I was accidentally a witness of your conversation with my father.

Tchepurny. I observed the accident. Why do your legs twitch like that?

Misha. This is merely a gesture of impatience. I am of a lively disposition.

Tchepurny. And what is the object of this vivacity?

Misha. In what way, sir? I am generally lively..

Tchepurny. I see, well good-bye.

Misha. Pardon me, I wish to say..

Tchepurny. Say what?

Misha. With regard to the proposition of my father. You see the idea is mine, but my father did not explain it with sufficient clearness.

Tchepurny. Oh, I don't know. I understood him.

Misha. Would you do me the honor to meet me to-night at the *Cafe de Paris*, on the Troitskaia, at nine o'clock?

Tchepurny. Well, do you know, I think I will not do you the honor.

Misha. I greatly regret.

Tchepurny (With a sigh of relief). And so do I. (Goes into the garden.)

Misha (Contemptuously looking after him). Ruffian. A veritable cattle doctor.

Fima. Wouldn't even talk to you.

Misha. Do you know Fima what I could do to you?

Fima. Nothing at all.

Misha. Suppose I will say that you stole from me the ring I gave you the other day? The sergeant of this precinct is a friend of mine.

Fima. Scared to death! That sergeant of yours is dead in love with me.

Misha. So much the worse for you. Joking apart, Fima. Let us talk business. Twenty-five rubles and rooms. A go?

Fima. Don't bother me, I am an honest girl.

Misha. You are a fool. But listen. I have a friend, a rich fellow, and good looking, too, Zotikoff. Shall I make you acquainted?

Fima. With him? Late again. He has written me two letters already.

Misha (Astonished and indignant). You lie? Has he? Such people! Rogues! But you're all right, Fima. If I did not have to marry rich, you'd be the one I'd marry.

Fima (Whispering). Somebody's coming.

(*LISA and TCHEPURNY returning from the garden.*)

Lisa (To MISHA). What do you wish?

Misha. I have just been trying to impress upon your maid that she should not throw chemical fluids into the garden. It ruins the vegetation, and besides it is dangerous in view of the approaching cholera.

Tchepurny. Good-bye, young man.

Misha. At your service, sir. (*Rapidly disappears.*)

Lisa (Ascending the porch steps). What a remarkably impudent face!

Tchepurny. My colleague is exerting his ingenuity in an endeavor to invent a living creature. But what is the use? See how obnoxious it is. Look again. I am a living creature. What is the use of me?

Lisa. You are in such a bad mood to-day. Let us finish our game of lotto. Lit down. I continue: 6, 23.

Tchepurny. I have 10, 29.

Lisa. I don't understand you. 8, 31. You are so healthy, so strong.

Tchepurny. 7, 36.

Lisa. And yet nothing seems to interest you. You are doing nothing. 5, 36. Now life is assuming such a tragic tone, hatred seems to be rampant everywhere. And there is so little love abroad.

Tchepurny. 36? 10, 41.

Lisa. How much of your labor you could impart to this life, how much beautiful, purposeful work! 8, I have 8, 44.

Tchepurny. I am a man of forty... and I have a row full.

Lisa. Forty? Nonsense. 10, 51.

Tchepurny. And you have spoiled me, too. 3, 51.

Lisa. It? Spoiled you?

Tchepurny. Yes, you all. Your brother, Elena Nicolaievna, you.

Lisa. 8. I have finished. Let us start it all over again, but without calling the figures. It interferes with the conversation. Explain to me how we have spoiled you.

Tchepurny. Until I met you I had lived with a great deal of curiosity.

Lisa. With interest?

Tchepurny. Yes, with curiosity. I was curious to know things. If I saw a new book, I would read it out of curiosity to see what there was in it that was new. If I came across a fight in the street, I would stop and

see what it all was about, would note whether the fellow was soundly licked and why. And when I studied veterinary surgery I did so with a great deal of curiosity.

Antonovna (*In the doorway*). Lisa, dear, did you take your drops?

Lisa. Yes, yes.

Antonovna. The tea urn is boiling and not a soul at the table. Lordy, Lordy! (*Goes into the garden*.)

Tchepurny. I regarded life with a feeling of general curiosity. I saw that it was a miserably managed affair. Men are greedy and stupid, and I am better and more sensible than they. It was a pleasure to know that, and my soul was content, although I could not help seeing that many a man lived a harder life than some horses and a worse one than some dogs which I treated. But even this is explained by the fact that man is more stupid than either the horse or the dog.

Lisa. Why talk in this strain? You don't believe what you are saying.

Tchepurny. Thus I lived, and I did not mind it. But when I fell in with you, I found that one is consumed with his science, another is delirious about cinnabar and ochre, another again pretends to be merry and rational, and you have taken a glimpse into some unfathomable depth and bear a tragedy in your soul.

Lisa. But how did we spoil you? I have the game.

Tchepurny. I can hardly say. At first I liked you all so well that I gave up liquors, for your conversation intoxicated me. And then I lost my curiosity and unrest entered my soul.

Antonovna (*Coming out of the garden*). Tea is ready.

Protassoff (*From his room*). Tea ready? Good, how do you do, scientist?

Tchepurny. How do you do, colleague.

Protassoff. Is Lena in the garden?

Lisa. Yes.

Protassoff. I shall go out and call her. You will lose this game.

Tchepurny. And if I lose..

Protassoff. Your complexion is fine to-day. And your eyes, Lisa, are calm, bright. It is pleasant to note this. (*Exit*.)

Lisa (*Irritated*). Why does he always talk to me like to a sick child?

Tchepurny. He treats all as children who are not interested in his protoplasms.

Lisa. They all talk to me like that, as if trying to remind me that I am sick.

Tchepurny. Be the first to forget it.

Lisa. Continue. You say you were seized with unrest. Why?

Tchepurny. It was a feeling of unrest and confusion. As if the mechanism of my soul had become rusty. It is absurd, and if you will not help me, Elisaveta Feodorovna...

Lisa. Dear Boris Nicolaievitch, drop this, I am a cripple, a monster.

Tchepurny. Then I shall perish like a bug on a dunghill.

Lisa. Stop, stop! Why do you torture me like this? Don't you understand?

Tchepurny (Frightened). Don't, don't, please. Forgive me. I am still. Calm yourself.

Lisa. My God, how excruciatingly pitiful it is.. How are they all helpless, lonely! (A pause.)

Tchepurny. Once I enjoyed sound sleep. But now I lie on my back, opening wide my eyes and give way to waking dreams, like a lovesick student, a mere freshman. I am anxious to do something, something heroic you know. But what? My imagination fails there. All I can think of is a swift stream, covered with ice floes. And I see on one of the floes a little pig, a red-haired little pig, squealing like mischief. And I cast myself into the icy flood to rescue him and succeed. But nobody wants him. How annoying, and then I am fated to eat him, my rescued little pig with horse-radish all alone.

Lisa (Laughing). How funny.

Tchepurny. So funny I could cry over it.

(ELENA, PROTASSOFF and VAGHIN come out of the garden.)

Elena. Will you have some tea?

Tchepurny. I will, thank you. What else can one do? But do you know, Elisaveta Feodorovna, you had better marry me. Would we not set up a duet of groans on this earth?

Lisa (With disagreeable surprise). How can you jest in such a painful and odd fashion?

Tchepurny (Calmly). But think, what else can we do, you and I?

Lisa (In terror). Be silent, be silent.

Elena. Well, it is rather pretty, but not very deep as far as the sense is concerned, and the subject is too foreign to most.

Vagbin. Art has always been the prize of a few. Herein is its pride.

Elena. Its tragedy.

Vagbin. Such is the belief of the majority, and for this reason alone I am against...

Elena. Do not pose. Art should ennoble man.

Vagbin. Art has no purposes.

Elena. There is nothing purposeless in the world.

Tchepurny. Unless you leave the world out of account.

Lisa. Heavens. How many times I have heard all this.

Elena. Dimitri Sergheievitch! Life is difficult, man often grows weary of living. Life is crude, is it not? What should rest the soul? The beautiful is rare, but when it is truly beautiful it warms my soul like the sun which suddenly bursts with radiance through the clouds. All men should comprehend and love beauty. Then they will build upon it a moral. They will value their actions as beautiful or otherwise. And then life itself will become beautiful.

Protassoff. This is marvelous, Lena, and it is possible.

Vagbin. What do I care for people? I want to loudly sing my song, alone and for myself.

Elena. Stop! What is the use of words? Art should mirror the striving of man to a distant goal and upward. When the artist has this striving, and when he has faith in the sunny power of beauty, his picture, his book, his sonata will have meaning for me. And if I am tired, I shall rest again and once more long for work, happiness and life.

Protassoff. Well spoken, Lena.

Elena. Sometimes I dream of such a canvas: Over the limitless sea a ship is sailing: the green wrathful waves encircle it in their greedy embrace. And on its prow I see figures of strong, powerful men. They merely stand, those men, and their faces are so frank, so brave. With a proud smile they look forward, ready calmly to perish on the way to their goal. That is the whole picture.

Vagbin. This is interesting, indeed.

Protassoff. Wait.

Elena. Let those people march under the glare of the sun over the yellow sand of the desert.

Lisa (Involuntarily). It is...red.

Elena. That does not matter. Let these men merely be special men, courageous and proud, unshakable in their desires and—simple, as all that is great is simple. Such a picture can evoke in me a feeling of pride in the human race, in the artist who created them, and it will bring to my mind those great men who have helped us so far to outstrip the animal and so far to advance towards becoming men.

Vagbin. I understand. This is interesting, is beautiful. (YAKOV TROSHIN approaches the porch and stops with his mouth open.) I shall try it, the devil take it!

Protassoff. Certainly, Dimitri. Paint it. Good for you, Lena ! This is something new in you, Lena, hey ?

Elena. How can you tell whether it is new or old with me ?

Troshin. L-l-ladies and gentlemen ! (*All turn towards him.*) I have been waiting for a long time until you might conclude your interesting conversation, but am compelled to intrude. Very simple !

Tchepurny. What do you want ?

Troshin. I recognize the accent of Little-Russia. Very simple—I lived in Little-Russia and play the flute.

Tchepurny. But what do you want ?

Troshin. Permit me, everything in order, sir. I beg to introduce myself, Second Lieutenant, Yakov Troshin, late assistant station-master at Log, the identical Yakov Troshin who lost a wife and a child in a train accident. I have other children, but no wife. And with whom have I the honor ?

Protassoff. How interesting is the conversation of a drunken man !

Lisa (Reproachfully). Pavel, how can you ?

Elena. What do you wish, sir ?

Troshin (Bowling). Pardon me, madam. (*Shows a foot in a house slipper.*) Sans shoes ! For fortune is fickle, madam. Tell me, kindly, where lives a locksmith by name of Yegor, I have forgotten his surname. Perhaps he has none. And perhaps he was merely an apparition of the night.

Elena. You will find him in the basement of the wing.

Troshin. Merci, madame ! I have been hunting for him all day. Am fatigued and can hardly stand on my feet. Around the corner ? Bon voyage ! It was only yesterday he had the honor of making my acquaintance. And now I am about to pay him a call. He should value this. Around the corner ? Very simple. Au revoir !

Protassoff. What a funny fellow ! Sans shoes !

Lisa. Hush, Pavel.

Troshin (Goes, unsteadily and mumbling). Ah, but you thought I was a nothing ! No, I am Yakov Troshin, he knows the proprieties. Very simple. Yakov Troshin ! (*Disappears.*)

Protassoff. Isn't he funny, Lena ?

Lisa. And what place in your canvas will men like him occupy ?

Elena. They will not be there.

Protassoff. They are like seaweed adhering to the bottom of the ship.

Yagbin. And will hinder its progress.

Lisa. Is ruin their fate, Elena? Will they perish without succor, alone?

Elena. They have perished already, Lisa.

Vagbin. We, too, are alone in the dark chaos of life.

Protassoff. Such people, my friend, are dead cells in the organism.

Lisa. How cruel you all are, I cannot listen to you, you are so cruel and blind. (*Goes into the garden.* TCHEPURNY rises slowly and follows her.)

Protassoff (half aloud). Do you know, Lena, it is impossible to discuss anything in her presence. She reduces all to her peculiar, sickly and gloomy angle.

Elena. Yes, it is hard. She lives in perpetual dread of life.

Vagbin. Elena Nicolaievna, on the prow of the ship there will stand a solitary figure. His is the face of a man who has buried all hope on the shore, behind him. But his eyes are aglow with the flame of great stubbornness. And he sails to create new hopes. Lonely among those who are lonely.

Protassoff. Let there be no storm ahead. Or let there be a storm, but in the distance ahead, in the path of the ship, let there be the glorious brightness of the sun. And call your painting 'To the Sun,' to the source of life.

Vagbin. Yes, to the source of life. There in the distance, among the clouds, radiant as the sun, there will be the face of a woman.

Protassoff. But why woman? Let there be among those men on the ship Lavoisier, Darwin. . But, gracious, I have become entangled into a long discussion. I must go. (*Rapidly leaves the room.*)

Vagbin (Sincerely). Dear friend, every day you are drawing me with mightier and stronger ties. I am ready to pray to you!

Protassoff (Calling from his room). Dimitri! Please come here a moment!

Elena. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness thereof.

Vagbin. I will paint this picture, you shall see. And it will sing with its colors a majestic hymn to freedom and beauty.

Protassoff. Dimitri!

Elena. Go, my friend! (*VAGHIN goes out.* ELENA musingly paces up and down the porch. TCHEPURNY's voice is heard from the garden.)

Tchepurny (calmly). It cannot be otherwise. It is the man who speaks, but it is still the animal that acts.

Lisa (Sadly). But when, when. . (*Their voices are no longer heard.*)

Melanie (In the yard, walking towards the porch). Ah, Elena Nicolai-
evna, are you at home?

Elena (Dryly). Does this surprise you?

Melanie. Why should it? How do you do?

Elena. Pardon me, but before I extend my hand to you. . .

Melanie. Wha—at?

Elena. I must ask you. Let us be frank and square. . You offered
my maid.

Melanie (Hastily). The hussy, she has sold me. .

Elena (Slowly). Then it is true? Do you understand, how it . . .
How shall I call your action?

Melanie (Candidly and earnestly). Yes, I understand. You want
me to be frank, I shall be so. Listen. . You are a woman. Perhaps you
love, and you will understand.

Elena. Hush, your brother is in the garden.

Melanie. What do I care? Listen. I love Pavel Feodorovitch. .
There you are. I love him so much, I am willing to be his cook, his ser-
vant. You too, don't I see? You love the artist. Pavel Feodorovitch. .
You don't need him. Do you want? I will kneel before you. Give him
to me. I will kiss your feet.

Elena (Astonished). What are you saying?

Melanie. What matters that? I have money. I shall build him a
laboratory which will be like a castle. I will serve him. Will ward off
the rude breath of a wind. Will sit at his door day and night. There!
Why do you want him? But to me he is like a saint of God, I love him!

Elena. Calm yourself, wait. Perhaps I do not fully understand you.

Melanie. You are a born lady. You are clever, a noblewoman, pure.
But my life has been hard and revolting. And I have seen only con-
temptible people. And he! He! He is so childlike, so exalted! On
his side I shall be like a queen! A slave to him, but a queen to all others.
And my soul will revive. I am longing for a pure man. Do you under-
stand me? There you are!

Elena (Moved). I find it hard to understand you. We shall have to
speak much. My God, how unhappy you must be.

Melanie. Yes, O, yes! You can understand, you must understand.
That is why I am speaking to you: I know you will understand every-
thing at once. And you will not deceive me; perhaps I too shall be like
other people if you don't deceive me.

Elena. I have no reason to deceive you. I feel your aching heart.
Come with me. . Come.

Melanie. How you speak. . . Can it be that you too are good?
Elena (Clasping her hand). Believe me. . Believe me that if people are only sincere, they will understand one another.

Melanie (Following her). Whether I believe you or not, I don't know. Your words are plain, but your sentiments I cannot grasp. Are you good or not? There is the rub. I fear to believe in the existence of good. I have not seen it. . And I myself am evil and in darkness. . In a sea of tears have I washed my soul. But still I am in darkness. (*Exeunt. ROMAN peeping from behind the corner with an axe in his hand. LISA and TCHEPURNY coming from the garden. ANTONOVNA enters from the room.*)

Antonovna. How they all have scattered! Running to and fro like a lot of madmen. Lisa, why are you wandering forever. You should sit still.

Lisa. Don't bother me, nurse.

Antonovna. No call to lose your temper. You know what strength you have. (*Returns to the rooms, grumbling.*)

Tchepurny. What a busybody! She must be very fond of you.

Lisa. It's merely a habit with her. She is used to nursing. She has lived with us over thirty years. Appallingly dull and stubborn. Is it not strange. Ever since I can remember our house was filled with the sound of sweet music and scintillated with the noblest thoughts of the world. But this has not made her better or wiser. .

(*PROTASSOFF and VAGHIN come out on the porch.*)

Protassoff (to VAGHIN). Do you understand when we shall have learned to weave the fibre of specially prepared woods you and I can wear hemlock vests and birch trousers.

Vagbin. Drop your wooden fancies. . They are a bore.

Protassoff. Ah, you. . You are a bore yourself.

Tchepurny. This is the parasol of my sister! I say colleague, Melanie asked me yesterday what is the relation of a hypothesis to a molecule. So I told her that a molecule is the granddaughter of a hypothesis.

Protassoff (Laughing). But why? She takes such a naive and warm interest in everything.

Tchepurny. Naive? Ahem! And I also told her that a monera and a monade are the foundlings of science. Wrong again? I must have got mixed in the genealogy.

Lisa. Don't you see, even in your relations to your sister it may be seen how people treat one another with malice and contempt.

Tchepurny. Where do you see malice?

Lisa (Nervously). No, I tell you there is more and more hatred accumulating on earth, cruelty is growing apace.

Protassoff. Lisa, are you unfolding again your black wings?

Lisa. Be still, Pavel, you can see nothing, you look through a microscope.

Tchepurny. And you through a telescope. It would be better, you know, to use the eyes.

Lisa (Painfully). You are all blind. Open your eyes. All that makes up your life, your thoughts, your feelings, all those things are like flowers blooming in a forest which is filled with gloom and decay. You are but few, you are unnoticeable on earth.

Vagbin (Dryly). But whom do you see?

Lisa. It is the millions and not the handfuls which are noticeable on earth. And among the millions flourishes hatred. You, intoxicated with beautiful words and thoughts fail to see it, but I saw how hatred burst out in the street, and how men, savage and wrathful men gloried in exterminating one another. Some day their malice will crush you.

Protassoff. All this is dreadful, Lisa, because as you see a storm is gathering and the atmosphere is quite close, which has affected your nerves.

Lisa (Imploring). Please don't talk about my ailment.

Protassoff. But think, who should hate me, or why should any one hate me? Or him?

Lisa. Who? All those people whom you have left so far behind.

Vagbin (Irritated). The devil take them! Shall we go back for their sake?

Lisa. And why? For becoming estranged from them. For indifference to their hard, inhuman life. Because you are well fed and dressed. Hatred is blind, but you are bright and it will see you.

Vagbin. The part of Cassandra becomes you well.

Protassoff. Wait, Dimitri! Lisa, you are wrong. We are engaged in a great and important task. He enriches life with beauty; I am searching out its secrets. The people of whom you speak will some day understand and appreciate our labor.

Vagbin. I do not care whether they will or not.

Protassoff. Do not look on them so gloomily. They are better than you think, and more rational.

Lisa. You don't know anything, Pavel.

Protassoff. Yes, I do know and I see. (*As he commences to speak ELENA and MELANIE, greatly agitated, appear on the porch.*) I see how life grows and develops before me, how it gives way to the stubborn search of

my thought and opens up before me its profound and wonderful secrets. I see myself a lord over a great domain; and I shall be the lord of all. All that which is growing becomes more complicated; men ask greater things of life and of themselves. Once under the rays of the sun there burst into life a formless and futile piece of albumen, it multiplied and became eagle, lion and man; a time will come when out of us men, and out of all people, there will come into being a majestic and harmonious organism—mankind. Mankind, ladies and gentlemen. Then every cell of that organism will have its past, full of great conquests of thought,—namely our labor. The present—is free and friendly labor which brings the reward of joy, and the future, ah, I see it, I feel it, it is beautiful. Humanity is growing and maturing. This is life and this is its meaning.

Lisa (yearningly). I would so much like to believe you, so much! (Picks up a note book and rapidly writes therein. MELANIE regards PAVEL almost with adoration, which is a little funny. ELENA, looking at first severe, smiles sadly. VAGHIN listens with animation. TCHEPURNY's face is bent over the table and cannot be seen.)

Vaghin. I like you as a poet.

Protassoff. The fear of death, this is the only thing which keeps men from being bold, beautiful and free. It impends over them like a black cloud. It covers the earth with its shadows, it gives birth to spectres. It compels them to stray from the straight path to freedom, from the broad road of experience. It moves them to create hasty and monstrous notions concerning the meaning of life, it frightens the reason, and thought then creates superstitions. But we, we are people, we are the children of the sun, of the radiant source of life, born of the sun, we shall conquer the dark fear of death. We are children of the sun. It is the sun glowing in our veins, which gives birth to proud and fiery ideas, illuminating the darkness of our ignorance, it is an ocean of energy, beauty and joy that intoxicates the soul.

Lisa (Jumping to her feet). Pavel, that was good. Children of the sun? That means me too? Me too, does it not? Does it not, Pavel? Me too?

Protassoff. Yes, yes. You too. Everybody. Yes, of course.

Lisa. Yes? This is good. I cannot say how good it is. Children of the sun! Yes? But my soul is split in two, is torn. Listen: (Reads at first with eyes closed.)

The eagle soars proudly skyward,
How glisten his powerful wings,
And fain I would follow the eagle
To join his celestial flight.

I will. But my efforts are fruitless,
 I'm a daughter of this poor earth,
 And the wings of my soul have been dragging
 So long in the dust and the mire.

I love your daring discussions,
 I am charmed with your radiant dreams,
 But I know, too, of sun-shunned dwellings,
 And the creatures that live there are blind.

To beautiful thoughts they are strangers,
 And sun does not cheer their eye,
 They live in a bitter oppression,
 And they lack attention and love.

Between you and me they are standing
 Like a gloomy and silent wall,
 Ah, say with what words of enchantment,
 Could I draw them all in my flight?

(*For a few moments they all regard her in silence. VAGHIN is displeased with her emotion.*)

Protassoff. How is that Lisa? You write verses?

Elena. You spoke well, Lisa, I understand you.

Vagbin. Pardon me, ladies and gentlemen. Elisaveta Feodorovna, I know other verses which may be a reply to you.

Lisa. Read them.

Vagbin. Like sparks which soar through the darkness
 Lonely we go through life,
 But we are the seed of the future,
 The signals of better things.

Let us serve in the radiant temple,
 Of liberty, beauty and truth,
 And teach those benighted blind creatures
 To join in the eagles' flight.

Protassoff. Fine, Dimitri. Simply great.

Melanie (*Ecstatically*). Lord, how beautiful. Elena Nicolaievna, I understand her, I do. (*Weeps*.)

Elena. Calm yourself, don't.

Lisa (Sadly). How you all rejoice! And I grieve to see so many bright thoughts scintillate and vanish like sparks in the gloom of night, without throwing any light on the people's path. This makes me sad.

Melanie (Kissing Protassoff's hand). You radiant saint. Thank you!

Protassoff (In confusion). But please? Why do you do that? My hands may be unclean.

Melanie. They cannot be.

Lisa. Boris Nicolaievitch, what is the matter with you?

Tchepurny. Nothing, I am listening.

Lisa. Was I right?

Tchepurny. The truth is with you.

Lisa. It really is?

Melanie (to ELENA). I shall go, dearest. (*Goes into the house, followed by ELENA.*)

Tchepurny. But the beauty is with him.

Vagbin. But what is better?

Tchepurny. Well, beauty is better, but people need the truth more.

Lisa. But what do you need more?

Tchepurny. I don't know, I should prefer a modicum of each.

Elena (Coming out). Pavel, Melanie Nicolaievna is calling you.

Protassoff. Lena, why did she kiss my hand? How stupid and disagreeable!

Elena (Smiling). You must bear with her.

Protassoff (Going). Such fat lips too! What does she want? (*From behind the terrace AVODTYA is heard screaming pitifully.*)

Avdotya. You lie, you dog!

Lisa (Shuddering). What is this? What is this?

Avdotya (Rushing in). Missed me, you devil!

Yegor (With a large piece of kindling wood in his hand). Stop, I tell you ...

Lisa. Merciful Heavens, hide her!

Avdotya (Running up the porch). Ladies, gentlemen, he is killing me.

Elena. Come in, quick.

Avdotya (to her husband). Aha, fooled you this time! (*Goes into the house with ELENA.*)

Tchepurny. That drunkard again! (*To LISA.*) Will you please go in?

Lisa. Stop him, stop him, for God's sake.

Trosbin (from behind the corner.) Yegor Ressov, proceed cautiously.

Tchepurny (To YEGOR). You get out!

Vagbin. Chase him away.

(*PROTASSOFF, followed by MELANIE, comes rushing out of the house.*)

Protassoff. Yegor? At it again?

Yegor (*To TCHEPURNY*). Go to the devil yourself, give me my wife.

Protassoff. You have gone crazy, Yegor.

Troshin. A wife is the property of her husband, sir. Very simple.

Yegor. You can't hide her. I'll go in and get her!

(*ROMAN enters, sleepy. Stands behind YEGOR.*)

Roman. Here, Yegor, hold your noise.

Tchepurny. Try to go in!

Lisa. Boris Nicolaievitch, he has a piece of wood in his hand.

Tchepurny. Don't worry, but you better go in the house.

Protassoff. Yes, Lisa, go in.

Yegor. Give her to me? What's the matter with you? It's my private business.

Melanie. Porter, call a policeman.

Roman. Yegor, I am going for the police.

Yegor. Listen to me, master! A visitor called on me..

Troshin. Very simple!

Yegor. An educated man, sir, a man with a soul!

Troshin. Perfectly correct, sir.

Yegor. And she slings a dirty wet rag in his mug!

Troshin. An unimpeachable fact, sir. Only not in his mug, but in his face, Yegor.

Protassoff. Yegor, good fellow, be a man, be a man.

Yegor. Bring out my wife.

Vagbin. Devil, what a face!

Melanie. Porter, I told you to call a policeman. Hold him, seize him.

Roman. I'm really going, Yegor, you better..

Yegor (*Walking up the porch steps*). If you don't understand plain language ...

Lisa. Run, he is coming up, he means to kill..

Tchepurny (*Going to meet YEGOR; with clenched teeth*). Well, strike..

Protassoff. Lisa, go in. (*Leads her into the house by force. MELANIE follows them.*)

Yegor. Let go.. (*Aims his piece of wood*).

Tchepurny (*Looking into his eyes*). Go ahead.

Yegor. I'll hit!

Tchepurny (*Quietly*). You lie, you cur!

Yegor. Stop your barking.

Tchepurny. Why don't you strike?

Yegor. Strike yourself (*Throws down his weapon*).

Tchepurny. Now off with you. Do you hear me?

Troshin (Hopelessly). Resvoff, withdraw.

Yegor (Retiring). Such a devil!

Tchepurny (Contemptuously). A mongrel cur!

Troshin (To VAGHIN). Bon soir, m'sieu. But the family sanctuary must remain inviolate.

Vaghin. Be gone.

Tchepurny (Descending the porch steps and advancing to YEGOR). Get out, will you? If it were not for the ladies, I would teach the two of you a lesson.

Troshin (Disappearing after YEGOR). I am submitting to force. Very simple.

Tchepurny (Returning to the porch). The darned brute!

Vaghin. Well, well... I enjoyed watching your expression.

Protassoff. Have you chased him away?

Lisa (Rushing out). Did he hit you? Did he touch you?

Tchepurny. That is not so simple a matter. (ELENA and MELANIE enter.)

Protassoff. What a nuisance. I shall not give him any more work. I am so excited. My hands are trembling, look, Elena.

Vaghin. But he is capable of murder.

Tchepurny (Smiling). Well, colleague, how about him? How about brutes like him? Are they too the children of the sun?

Lisa (Suddenly). You lied, Pavel. It will come to nothing. Life is full of brutes. Why speak of the joys of the future? Why? Why deceive yourselves and others? You have left the people far behind. You are solitary, wretched little creatures. Do you really fail to grasp the horror of this life? You are surrounded by enemies. Brutes are everywhere. Cruelty must be destroyed. Hatred must be conquered. Understand me, do understand me! (Goes into hysterics.)

ACT III

Stage setting same as Act I. Cloudy and threatening. ELENA in an armchair near the corner. LISA excitedly pacing the floor.

Elena. Do not excite yourself.

Lisa. I am ill, but my thoughts are sound.

Elena. Does anyone state the contrary?

Lisa. My words are plain and tasteless. They bore you. You don't like to feel the tragic truth of life.

Elena. You exaggerate so...

Lisa. No, I don't. Just look at the abyss which divides you from your cook.

Elena. But will it vanish if I shall stand on its edge and weep, trembling with fear?

Lisa. And can you live calmly knowing that people do not understand your soul? I cannot. I fear those who do not understand me. This is the secret of my illness. Elena, sacrifices are called for. Do you understand? One must bring self to sacrifice self.

Elena. To sacrifice oneself? Good, if done willingly, with joy, in the madness of ecstasy. But to force oneself, Lisa? No, it would be unworthy of a human being.

Antonovna (*From the dining room*). Elena Nicolaievna.

Lisa (*In annoyance*). What is it, nurse?

Antonovna. Hush, not you. The landlord is here.

Lisa. Let him wait, nurse. Go. (*Exit Antonovna*.) Am I wrong then?

Elena. I did not say so.

Lisa. Do you realize how lonely we all are?

Elena. No, I don't feel that.

Lisa. You simply don't wish to speak to me. They have all grown tired of me. You want to enjoy life and to ignore that which is crude and horrible.

Elena. How can you force yourself to feel?

Lisa. And you? Is not yours a hard life? But you are proud, and you will not admit it. I see your relations with Pavel.

Elena. Let us leave that.

Lisa (*Triumphant*). Ah! It hurt? Did it not?

Elena. No, but it is not a pleasant subject.

Lisa. It did hurt. Let it hurt. It will revive you. You are lonely, Elena. You are unhappy.

Elena. Lisa, this joy is not a good joy. What do you want?

Lisa. What do I want? (*Pause. Frightened*.) I don't know that. I don't know that. I would like to live, but don't know how...cannot. I imagine I have no right to live as I would. I would like to call my soul my own...my own. I would like to shake off that fear and rest, but none will help.

Elena (*Clasping her hand*). Pardon me, but is not Tchepurny ...

Lisa. What right have I? I am sick, am I not? You all say so. You all frequently say so. Too frequently. Let me... I cannot speak of this. Go. Let me. (*Hurriedly goes to her room. ELENA, with a deep sigh, paces the floor, holding her head in her hands. Stops before the portrait of her husband, regards it, biting her lips nervously. Her hands drop.*)

Elena (half aloud). Farewell.

Antonovna (Enters). May the landlord come in now?

Elena. Admit him.

Antonovna (Outside). You may go in, Nazar Avdeievitch.

Nazar. Long health to you, ma'am.

Elena (Nodding). What do you wish?

Nazar (Smiling in confusion). Pardon me, but it's Pavel Feodorovitch I am looking for.

Elena. He is engaged.

Nazar. Hardly know how to broach the subject to you, ma'am.

Elena. Speak, I shall tell him.

Nazar. The subject is a little...

Elena. Just as you please.

Nazar. Well, what's the odds? The police, ma'am, complains about the odors. Regarding the drains and other places.

Elena (Frowning). What has my husband to do with this?

Nazar. Well, of course, he is human like the rest of us... All of us were born in sin. But the police on account of the cholera is particularly strict. There must be no odors. The police does not take into consideration that it's perfectly natural, ma'am. And even threatens me with a fine of three hundred rubles.

Elena (With repulsion). What do you want?

Nazar. I wanted to consult him, ma'am. Concerning as it were some chemical means, by way of sprinkling against the odor...

Elena (Indignantly). What a.... (*Controlling herself*). All right, I shall speak to him. Good-bye.

Nazar. Will you speak to him soon?

Elena (Going). Nurse will bring you the answer.

Nazar (Pursuing her with a glance). Deeply touched, ma'am. Whew, how proud! Wait, some day I'll humble you.

(*Exit. PROTASSOFF, and ELENA enter.*)

Protassoff. And kindly send for Yegor, Lena.

Elena. Yegor again?

Protassoff. What can I do without him? He is so skillful. He grasps your idea so quickly. Look, he made me a little furnace, and it's a

work of art. Beautiful. What a dark, dull day. No sitting to-day?

Elena. No. When can I have a few minutes with you?

Protassoff. Leave that until evening, please. I shall be disengaged this evening. Do you feel bored? Where is Dimitri?

Elena. I presume he has other business to attend to besides the duty of entertaining me.

Protassoff (missing the point). Yes, probably. But do you know lately I have observed something new in your face, something full of meaning.

Elena. Indeed?

Protassoff. Yes, yes. But I—vanish like smoke. (*Hurries to his apartments.*)

Fima (entering). Ma'am, please permit me to go.

Elena. But who will be on duty?

Fima. I mean I wish to leave the service altogether.

Elena. All right, but first of all call Yegor.

Fima (firmly). I shall not go to Yegor's.

Elena. Why?

Fima. Just so. I shan't go there.

Elena. Call the nurse.

Fima. She has gone for a walk to the cemetery.

Elena. You may go when she comes. Send me the porter, can you do that?

Fima. Yes, ma'am. And kindly let me go to-day.

Elena (after her). Very good.

Tchepurny (in the doorway from the porch). Why are your doors open to-day? Good morning.

Elena (offering her hand). I don't know. The servants seem to be so distract this morning.

Tchepurny. They are scared of the cholera.

Elena. They say that it is spreading.

Tchepurny. Yes, somewhat. . Is Elisaveta Feodorovna at home?

Elena. She is in her rooms.

Tchepurny. And her health?

Elena. Fairly good. As usual not excellent.

Tchepurny (careworn). Yes. . A tragic soul. .

Elena. Pardon me, Boris Nicolaievitch, if I interfere in what is not my business, but do you mind?

Tchepurny. Ah, what is it?

Elena. She told me that you had proposed to her.

Tchepurny (quickly). And how did she speak?

Elena. What do you mean?

Tchepurny. How did she look? What was her mien? Did she make a face? Did she mock?

Elena (in surprise). What makes you think so? She spoke with joy.

Tchepurny. No, was she really?

Elena. She spoke with a quiet joy and so pleasantly.

Tchepurny. I'm a fool. You know I'm an ass!

Roman. Was I called here?

Tchepurny. Nobody called you, I was calling myself those names, good fellow.

Elena. I had called him. Go for Yegor, the locksmith.

Roman. Yegor, ma'am?

Elena. Yes.

Roman. Right now?

Elena. Yes, yes.

Roman. Oh, very well. (*Exit*.)

Tchepurny (overjoyed). Let me have your hand, I must kiss it. You have made me happy. There you are. It comes unexpectedly, whether it be a calamity or good fortune.

Elena. Pardon me, but I don't understand you.

Tchepurny. My Lord! Why don't you? Did she speak of my proposal of marriage with joy?

Elena. Yes, I assure you.

Tchepurny (triumphantly). And yet she refused me.

Elena (smiling). Pardon me, but it sounds so funny.

Tchepurny. It is funny. It's just as I thought. She refuses to marry me not because she dislikes me, but because she fears her sickness.

Elena. You are right.

Tchepurny. Now I know what I shall do. I shall have easy sailing. What a lucky chance. Chance is a great thing.

Elena. But you must change your tie. She dislikes red.

Tchepurny (smiling). I put it on purposely. To tease her. It does not make any difference now, whether it is green or red. It's all the same, but I could not stay without a tie. (*Going*.) Thank you. (*YEGOR appears in the doorway, much perturbed, unkempt*.) A stranger, come in. Let's be friends. Good. Ah you, savage!

Elena (to *YEGOR*). I shall call master at once.

Yegor (brokenly). Wait, ma'am.

Elena. What is it?

Yegor. Wife is sick.

Elena. What is the trouble with her.

Yegor. Vomiting.

Elena (disquieted). Has she been sick long?

Yegor. Since morning. And she's calling you all the time. 'Call the madame,' she says, 'or I'll perish.'

Elena. Why didn't you call me? Shame!

Yegor. I was ashamed of myself. Made too much scandal here yesterday.

Elena. Nonsense. I am going to see her.

Yegor. Wait. . I am afraid.

Elena. Of what?

Yegor. Maybe it's cholera.

Elena. Rubbish! Why be afraid?

Yegor (begging and yet almost imperiously). Cure her, Elena Nikolaievna!

Elena. A doctor must be called. Go and fetch him.

Yegor. No, no doctors! I don't believe in them. You alone.

Protassoff (enters). Ah, you are here, my warrior.

Elena. Pavel, wait, his wife is sick.

Protassoff. I suppose it's from your beatings. .

Elena. He thinks it's the cholera. I am going there.

Protassoff (nervously). You — there? No, Lena, please don't. Why you?

Elena (surprised). But why not?

Protassoff. It may be the cholera.

Yegor (With a dull roar). Then she must die? Are we not human?

Elena. Be still, Yegor. . Pavel, how awkwardly. .

Protassoff. What do you know, Lena? You are no doctor. And this is no joke. It is actually dangerous.

Yegor (wrathfully). And to those who are perishing is it not dangerous?

Protassoff (to YEGOR). Please don't shout at me.

Elena (reproachfully). Pavel! Let us go, Yegor!

Protassoff. I am going too. This is very injudicious, Lena. . (*The three go into dining room, YEGOR leading the way. Their voices are heard.*)

Elena. Return and order the carriage by telephone.

Protassoff. It's a case for a doctor and not for you. What are you? (*Returns in agitation.*) What is she in this case? Nurse! Devil take it! She refused to let me go along! Fima! Or nurse! (*Fima comes in on*

the run.) I am shouting and shouting and you are admiring yourself in some mirror.

Fima (offended). Not at all. . I was cleaning knives.

Protassoff. Drop the knives and go to Yegor's.

Fima (determinedly). I shan't go there.

Protassoff. Why? Madame is there.

Fima. That makes no difference.

Protassoff. But why?

Fima. Cholera is there.

Protassoff (mocking her). Cholera! But madame has gone there.

(Bell.)

Fima. Bell, sir!

Protassoff. Is that so? Then go and open the door. (Exit FIMA.) I have forgotten about the telephone. The devil! (MELANIE enters.) Ah, is it you? Do you know the news? we have cholera out in our yard. Funny, isn't it? And Elena went to play the doctor. How do you like that?

Melanie. You don't say! And my neighbor, the colonel, had his cook taken away yesterday. And Elena Nicolaievna has gone there? What for?

Protassoff. That is an unfathomable secret.

Melanie. And you let her? How could you?

Protassoff. How? I don't know. Yes, that telephone message.

(Runs to his room.)

Fima (out of the dining room). How do you do, Melanie Nicolaievna.

Melanie (in an unfriendly tone). How are you, my beauty?

Fima. I have a great favor to ask of you.

Melanie. What is it?

Fima. I am going to get married.

Melanie. Indeed?

Fima. To a respectable man. To a highly respectable man.

Melanie. Who is he?

Fima. A neighbor of yours.

Melanie (jumps up in surprise). Not the colonel?

Fima (modestly). Ah, no, that's above me. Wassili Wassilievitch Kotcherine.

Melanie. That old devil? Fie! He is almost sixty. Suffering from rheumatism, too. How can you make up your mind to do such a thing? But he certainly has money. Girl, girl! I feel sorry for you. Drop him with his money.

Fima. My mind is all made up and arrangements are made.

Melanie. Too bad, what do you want of me?

Fima. Being an orphan, won't you act the mother's part and give me away at the wedding?

Melanie (with a mocking grimace). There! How much did you sell me out for to Elena Nicolaievna.

Fima (taken back). I?

Melanie. Yes, you! Hey?

Fima (quickly recovering). Too bad! I thought you having sold yourself once to an old man...

Melanie (Crushed). How. . How. .

Fima. Might help me out.

Melanie (Brokenly) . . Dare you?

Fima (calmly and cruelly). You know very well yourself that an arrangement like this is better than to go in the street. It's one against a hundred.

Melanie (whispering terrorstricken). Go. . Go away. . I shall give you money. . but leave me. . go away! I shall pay. .

Fima. Thank you, ma'am! When will you give. .

Melanie. Go away, I have nothing with me.

Fima. I shall come to see you this evening. . Don't you fool me.

Melanie. No! Go, for God's sake! (*FIMA goes, taking her time.* *MELANIE drops heavily into an armchair and weeps in agony.*)

Protassoff (Entering). Has she not come back? What is the matter with you? What is the trouble?

Melanie (Kneeling before him). Saint of God, save me a sinner!

Protassoff (Astounded). What did you say? Stand up! Why all this?

Melanie (Embracing his feet). I am sinking in the mire. . sinking in my worthlessness. . Stretch out your hand to me. . Who is better than you on earth?

Protassoff (Frightened). But pardon me, I shall fall, if you don't stop. And don't kiss my trousers. What is the matter with you?

Melanie. I have sinned and have ruined my soul. Cleanse me. Who can do it but you?

Protassoff (Trying to understand her). You better sit down. Or rather get up. Now take a seat. What is it you wish?

Melanie. Take me to yourself. Permit me to live near you. Only let me see you, hear you every day. I am rich. . Take all I have. Build yourself a cabinet for your science. A high tower! Go up high! Live

there on high! But I shall stand below, at the threshold, and will admit none. Sell all my houses, all my land, and take all.

Protassoff (Smiling). Excuse me. . But it's quite an idea. . . The deuce! That might make a splendid laboratory!

Melanie (Overjoyed). Yes, yes. . And take me too, so that I might always see you. Do not speak to me, I won't need it. Just look at me sometime. Just throw me an occasional smile. If you had a dog, would you not sometime smile on him? Would you not sometime caress him? Let me then be. . your dog.

Protassoff (Worriedly). But wait! What is all this for? It is odd. . So unnecessary. . You know I am astounded. Could I know that you would become so fascinated?

Melanie (Without listening to him). I am stupid, as dense as a log. Your books, you know, I never understood. Do you think I ever read them?

Protassoff (Dumbfounded). No? But what then?

Melanie. Dearest, I used to kiss them. I would look at them and find them full of words which none but you could understand and I would kiss them.

Protassoff (In confusion). This accounts for the spots on the bindings. But why kiss books? It is a sort of a fetishism.

Melanie. But understand me, I love you. I feel so happy beside you, so pure and bright. . Man of God, I love you.

Protassoff (In a low tone, with astonishment). Pardon me, but how. .

Melanie. I love you like a dog. I cannot speak, but I can remain dumb. I was dumb for years, while they were tearing my heart into shreds.

Protassoff (Suddenly conceiving hope that he has misunderstood her). Excuse me. . I cannot grasp your fundamental idea. Perhaps. . perhaps you might find it more convenient to speak to Lena about this?

Melanie. I have spoken to her. She is beautiful. She knows that you do not love her.

Protassoff (Jumping up). How? I don't love her? Now you. .

Melanie. She knows it all, she feels it. She is good. But why two flames together? She is proud.

Protassoff (In confusion). You know all this is so mixed up. In other words I have never been in a more absurd situation.

Melanie. But when you and I will be together. . . When you will be mine. .

Protassoff (With a show of irritation). Wha-a-t? How 'mine'?

(Regards her with a little fear). Melanie Nicolaievna. You must explain yourself. Pardon me for asking a pointblank question: Perhaps you have fallen in love with me?

Melanie (Regards him for a few moments and continues with a hopeless tone). But what have I been talking about all this time? Darling. I have been speaking about this very thing.

Protassoff. Indeed. Pardon me. I thought. . . I thought. . . something else.

Melanie (half aloud). I suppose that I have gone crazy?

Protassoff (Nervously pacing the floor). Of course. . . I am very grateful. . . and deeply touched. . . But to my regret. . . I am a married man. . . No, no, I didn't mean that. . . You see, this cannot be solved all at once. No. But you know, Lena, need not know about all this. We will straighten this out somehow between ourselves.

Melanie. But she knows it already.

Protassoff (In despair). Knows what?

(TCHEPURNY and LISA descend the stairway. They silently cross the room towards the porch. TCHEPURNY is grimly calm. LISA is agitated.)

Melanie. Hush, some one is coming. My brother.

Protassoff (To his sister). Ahem! You are going?

Tchepurny. Going, yes. *(Pause.)*

Protassoff (Sincerely). Melanie Nicolaievna, will you not agree with me that this is an extraordinary situation? An impossible situation. Perhaps I seem funny to you and this offends you. But my good friend, this is all so strange and so unnecessary to me.

Melanie. Unnecessary?

Protassoff. Absolutely. Pardon me, and I shall have to tell Lena all about this. Then I shall go. She is still there and it annoys me. I must tell her. Do not be angry. *(Goes to his room. MELANIE follows him, but returns broken and crushed.)*

Melanie (To herself). Did not reach him. What a shame. *(ELENA enters from the porch.)* Dearest friend, take pity on a fool.

Elena. What is the matter? Did you speak to Pavel?

Melanie. I told him all. . .

Elena. And he? Well?

Melanie. All my words, all my love, all was lost on him.

Elena (Candidly). I feel sorry for you. . . What did he say?

Melanie. I don't know. Nothing touched him. Nothing reached his heart. You cannot soil fire. I knelt before him. . . and he did not understand me.

Elena. I told you to wait. I should have asked him first.

Melanie. And I feared that you would deceive me. I gave him all. All my money, the price of my soul's shame, he would not accept it. Who else would have refused it? None but he.

Protassoff (Enters with his hat in his hand). Elena, immediately into the tub. Have all your garments burned. Fima! Get the bath ready. Fima! That girl is a myth and not a servant, the devil take her!

Elena. Don't worry. My bath is ready, and I shall attend to everything.

Protassoff. Please do, cholera is not to be trifled with.

Elena (Going). All right, I am going.

(*Protassoff sees his wife to the door, then looks furtively at Melanie.*
She looks guiltily to the ground, with her head bowed.)

Protassoff. What a cloudy and disagreeable day.

Melanie (Quietly). Yes.

Protassoff. And this cholera, too. So out of place.

Melanie. Certainly very unexpected.

Protassoff. And my refrigerator broke down.

Melanie. Pavel Feodorovitch, forgive me.

Protassoff (Cautiously). What do you mean?

Melanie. Forget all I have been speaking to you about.

Protassoff (Pleased). Do you mean it?

Melanie. I do. I was stupid. . impertinent.

Protassoff. Melanie Nicolaievna, I am very fond of you. . That is, I respect you. You are so remarkably direct and whole-souled. You take such a warm interest in everything. But that was so really superfluous, that is—what you were telling me. Let us be good friends, and that will be all. All people should be friends, should they not?

Melanie. I feel ashamed to look at you.

Protassoff. Let us forget that. Give me your hand. It is wonderful! How good people are! How much simplicity, how much sense they have, and how apt they are to understand one another! I love the people. They are amazingly interesting creatures.

Melanie (Smiling). I have never seen people. . I have lived among vendors. My husband sold meat. What people are I have only learned in your house. . And at once I wanted to buy. .

Protassoff. How can you say such things. .

Melanie. Don't listen to me. . . I merely. . .

Protassoff (With animation). I say, Melanie Nicolaievna, let us have some tea.

Melanie. Very well, I shall go and see Elena Nicolaievna and try to regain my composure.

Protassoff. And I shall order the tea. You know my refrigerator broke down on me, hang it all, and Yegor's wife was taken ill, so that I cannot work today. . (*Laughing goes to his apartments.*)

Melanie (After him, with deep emotion). My sweet babe, my innocent babe. . (*Going to ELENA. ANTONOVNA coming out of the dining room, angry. Grumbles.*)

Antonovna. It looks like a horde of Tartars had been through the house! Just look. . Everything in wild disorder, all doors open. . No, it's no use. . Can't stir out of the house. It's only the dead folks in the cemetery who keep order, that's the only spot where all is peace. (*LISA and TCHEPURNY enter from the porch.*) Lisa, your medicine and your milk!

Lisa (Angrily). Be still. . Go away. .

Antonovna. Well, what do you think of that!?

Tchepurny. Is it all off then?

Lisa. Yes, Boris Nicolaievitch. Never mention the matter again, never!

Tchepurny. Indeed! Why I have only spoken of it to-day, because I fancied that you were mistaken.

Lisa. No, it is not my illness which is the obstacle. . I do not fear it. I cannot. . I will not have children. . No one asks himself why people are born. I have asked myself that question. There is no room on this earth for personal life, not for him who has not the strength to make the life of the whole world his personal life. You say you will go away?

Tchepurny (Calmly). Very well. (*VAGHIN enters from the porch.*)

Lisa. You will be better off. And please don't wear red ties. It is vulgar. How I regret that you wore red today.

Vagbin. What a day! A regular October day.

Tchepurny. Yes, it is a poor sort of a day.

Lisa. Where do you think of going?

Tchepurny (Calmly). I? I am going to Moghileff.

Lisa (Perturbed). Why there?

Tchepurny. I have there so many acquaintances.

Vagbin. Gone to Moghileff! Is this not slang for dying?

Lisa (With a shudder). What are you saying! Fie!

Vagbin. Are you frightened by slang? Do you fear that Boris Nicolaievitch will die? He will not unless he shoots himself.

Lisa (Reproachfully and nervously). Why do you say such things?

Vagbin. I hasten to calm you. I have never heard of a veterinary surgeon shooting himself.

Antonovna (From the dining room). Lisa, please pour the tea.
(*LISA goes silently.*)

Vagbin. I plead guilty to an inclination to tease her. She is posing with her world-sorrow. These mourners for the griefs of the world are unmitigated bores. And anything unhealthy arouses my instinctive animosity.

Tchepurny. How about that painting 'On the way to the sun!' Or what you may call it.. Do you intend to paint it?

Vagbin. Most decidedly.. A magnificent theme, isn't it? By the way, I need you for that picture.

Tchepurny (Astonished). Me? Where will you find a proper place for me? In the hold?

Vagbin (Looking at him searchingly). You have an obstinate fold right over your eyes.. It is very characteristic. Will you object to my sketching it right now?

Tchepurny. Sketch away.

Vagbin (Producing a sketch-book). Splendid.. Just a moment..
(*Sketches.*)

Tchepurny. Are you fond of anecdotes?

Vagbin. Very.. Provided they are not stupid..

Tchepurny. Well I will tell you one..

Vagbin. Please do.. When I sketch I never say a word..

Tchepurny. So I hear. Well I shall start. An English mission was crossing the Channel, from Dover to Calais, and a Frenchman happened to be on board. There was a spirited discussion as to the merits of both nations. There was quite a great deal of bragging. The Englishmen said : 'We are everywhere.' But the Frenchman replied : 'You are wrong. Look at this Channel. Many French diplomats have drowned in it, but never a Britisher.' Then a young Briton, an attache of the Embassy, jumped overboard and was drowned.

Vagbin (After a pause). Well and what?

Tchepurny. That's all.

Vagbin. The whole anecdote?

Tchepurny. Yes. What else do you want? The young fellow met his death by drowning in order to keep up the reputation of his country.

Vagbin. This may be a marine anecdote but it lacks salt.

Tchepurny. You are clever at tying your neckties.

Vagbin. Do you think so? I was taught by a lady.

Tchepurny. And I admire your choice of colors.

Protassoff (Enters). Sketching? Has Lena come out yet? Do you know, Dimitri, she has been bothering with a cholera patient today..

Vagbin. What did you say?

Protassoff. She has..With the wife of my locksmith..What do you think of that?

Vagbin. I find it, to say the least, absurd. How did you permit it?

Elena (Entering). Could I have been forbidden?

Vagbin. But this..was not..any of your business.

Elena. Why not? If I chose to make it my business, it was.

Vagbin. You and ...The devil!

Protassoff. But she is a plucky one. I was afraid for her, though. Did you take your drops?

Vagbin (Finishing his sketch). That's all. Thank you. That is a very fine feature..

Tchepurny. I am very glad to hear it.

Lisa (Calling). Won't you come and have tea?

Vagbin. We are coming! (*Takes TCHEPURNY's hand and they go together.*)

Protassoff (In a low tone). Elena, I have something to tell you.

Elena. Right now?

Protassoff (Hurriedly). Yes..An absurd incident. Melanie Nicolai-
evna..Has she gone?

Elena (With a smile). She has..

Protassoff. Wait, don't smile. I believe she has fallen in love with me. Without the least warning, what do you think of that? I swear, I never gave her the slightest cause, Lena. Why do you smile? It is really a serious matter..It was really painful. She wept, kissed my hand, ... right here..

Elena (Laughing). Don't, Pavel..

Protassoff (Slightly annoyed). You surprise me. I tell you she was in earnest. She offered me money, she said: 'I want to live with thee.' She called me 'Thou.' Don't think that I gave her the slightest cause to be familiar. And she somehow always smells of saltpeter...

Elena (Laughing). I can't help it..This is so funny..You are so funny..

Protassoff (Mortified). Why? It is painful and not funny. It is absurd. I was thoroughly alarmed..I was saying something to her, but my mind was quite upset. She was thoroughly in earnest, mind you.

And she said too that you knew all, but I could not make out what 'all' was. At first I hesitated about speaking to you.

Elena (Sweetly). I know all.. You are a dear..

Protassoff. You know all? Why..why did you not warn me?

Elena (As if suddenly recollecting something; dryly). Let us leave it till this evening.

Protassoff. Very well; I want some tea. But you know I am so glad.. You will then straighten out this tangle yourself?

Lisa (Calling from the dining room). Lena, come here.

Elena. I am coming.

Protassoff. You will take this on yourself, will you?

Elena. Good..Don't worry..Let us go. (Exeunt.)

Protassoff. Do you know as I was raising her from the floor..(Finishes his sentence in a whisper).

Elena. Fie, Pavel, how rude you are..

(For a few moments the stage is empty. In the dining room is heard the sound of voices, dishes, etc. TCHEPURNY enters with the words: 'I shall have a smoke here.' Walks to the window, with his hands folded behind him. Then takes a cigarette from his lips and sings softly.) 'The golden cloud was resting' (His voice breaks.) Ahem! 'The golden cloud was resting'..

Vagbin (Entering). 'On the breast of the giant rock'..I too am exiled. There is a ban on smoking inside.

Tchepurny. You are fond of anecdotes, then?

Vagbin. Have you another one without a point?

Tchepurny. I will make one up for you. But now I am going home.

Vagbin. How about the anecdote?

Tchepurny. To-morrow. It is raining..Have I or have I not an umbrella with me? That is the question, as Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, would say. Good-bye.

Vagbin (Detaining him while shaking hands). You are going away somewhere I hear?

Tchepurny (With a smile.) Yes, I am going away. I have to go.

Vagbin (Smiling also). Well, *bon voyage*. I somehow like you today.

Tchepurny. Thank you.

Vagbin. You look like a lover today. Tell me, were you ever in love?

Tchepurny. I think once as a student. I had a weakness for my landlady and even went so far as to tell her..

Vagbin. Was she pretty?

Tchepurny. That is hard to tell. She was about fifty at the time. And when I told her she raised my rent three rubles a month.

Vagbin (Laughing). Really?

Tchepurny. Yes, indeed. Well, good-bye. (*Goes laughing into the dining room, VAGHIN looks after him thoughtfully, smokes, hums a song and shakes his head. ANTONOVNA enters from ELENA's room.*)

Antonovna (Grumbling). I thought it's that fellow walking around here.

Vagbin. What other fellow?

Antonovna. The Little-Russian. Where is he?

Vagbin. Gone home.

Antonovna. That's all he knows. Comes here, drinks his tea and goes home, and the poor girl is all worn out. Doesn't sleep nights. You ought to say a word to him.

Vagbin. What girl? Why doesn't she sleep? And what ought I to say to the girl?

Antonovna. Listen to him! There is only one girl in this house. She's aging. Why trouble her for nothing? A sick girl, too. But you keep walking about and it's talk, talk, talk. And nobody cares for a poor soul with trouble enough to drive her into the grave. (*Goes into the dining room.*)

Vagbin (Strokes his forehead, thinks with concentration, then shakes his head, as if making a sudden decision). Pavel!

Protassoff (Enters with a book in his hand). Here I am.

Vagbin (Acidly). What a self-contented face you have.

Protassoff (Surprised). Was it to tell me this that you called me?

Vagbin. I want to speak to you.

Protassoff (Yawning). Yes? They all want to speak to me to-day. I have heard a great many strange things to-day, but not a sensible word.

Vagbin. I shall speak sensibly.

Protassoff (Looking into his book). Don't be so self assured.

Vagbin. Lay down your book.

Protassoff. Where? Or rather why?

Vagbin. Anywhere. The fact of the matter is. . I love Elena Nicolaievna.

Protassoff (Calmly). What a startling statement. Who does not love her?

Vagbin. I love her, understand, as a woman. .

Protassoff (Calmly). Well, and? (*Jumps up suddenly.*) And she? Does she know? Did you speak to her? What did she reply to you?

Vagbin. Yes, she knows.

Protassoff (Perturbed). Well? What. . was her answer?

Vagbin (In confusion). She did not reply anything definite. Not yet. .

Protassoff (Relieved). Of course not. I knew it. Of course.

Vagbin (With self-restraint). Wait. The whole gist of the matter is that you don't treat her right.

Protassoff (Amazed). I? How? When?

Vagbin. You ignore her. You have killed her love to you.

Protassoff (Alarmed). Did she say so?

Vagbin. I say so.

Protassoff.. (Offended). Permit me. Have you all gone crazy to-day? One says I don't love Lena. Another says she does not love me. What is the meaning of all this? You are all irresponsible. A man may lose his mind talking to you. But she never says a word. She is silent. What have you to do with this? I don't understand it.

Vagbin. Pavel, we have been friends from boys up. I love you.

Protassoff. If you could but add to your love a little tact, yes. And grant a person the right to speak for himself. To champion his own liberty, his own worth. When he has learned to do so, he will do better than you. .

Vagbin. But if he does not know how. .

Protassoff. Then the devil may take him, such a person is not worthy to be called human.

Vagbin. But if he does not desire to?

Protassoff. Not to desire is impossible. Pardon me, Dimitri. Like all artists you are not in earnest. Yesterday you were dumb, but to-day you suddenly love her.

Vagbin. One cannot talk with you. However, I have said all I had to say. Good-bye. I am going.

Protassoff. Wait, I shall call Lena. Lena!

Vagbin (Alarmed). Why? What is this for?

Protassoff. Why? Lena! Let her say before you what is the trouble. (ELENA enters). Elena, here. He, too, like Melanie, it appears, is in love. But he is in love with you.

(ELENA regards VAGHIN sternly and interrogatingly.)

Vagbin (Agitated). Well, yes. What of it? I have told him that I love you. . That you find it hard to live with him. .

Elena. Thank you. . This is so chivalrous. . And so youthful. . So youthful. .

Vagbin (Insulted). I did not deserve this irony. . I did not want a feeling of hostility to Pavel, but it began to accumulate. I may have acted stupidly, tactlessly, rudely, but I was guided by feelings of comradeship and by love. I gave way to an impulse which was awakened in my heart by the words of the nurse. I longed for something good. . for you, Elena Nicolaievna. And between people like ourselves all things should be done simply and plainly.

Elena. I thank you.

Protassoff. I did not say anything to offend you, Dimitri?

Vagbin. No. . . I am going. . Good-bye. .

Elena. You will come to-morrow, won't you?

Vagbin (Going). Yes, probably.

Protassoff (Looks at his wife inquiringly). Well, Lena, and what stand do you take in this matter?

Elena. And you?

Protassoff. It's a good thing you are so calm. Whew! What a day! Did he make a declaration to you?

Elena. He did.

Protassoff. Said that he loved you, and so forth?

Elena. Exactly, that he did and so forth.

Protassoff. What do you think of the artist? Well, and what did you say?

Elena. Many things. . different things. .

Protassoff. But you told him that you loved me?

Elena. No, I did not. .

Protassoff You did wrong. You should have told him. You should have said: 'I love Pavel, my husband.' After that he would have—of course. . Ahem! Yes. I really can't imagine how he would have acted in that case. . But this is not of real importance.

Elena. What do you think is of importance?

Protassoff. That such an incident does not occur again.

Elena. Pavel, you spoke of him, and attempted to divine how he would act in a given case. . You expressed a desire not to be bothered again. . Where then am I?

Protassoff (Perturbed). What do you mean? What do you wish to say?

Elena. Not much. I feel that I am not necessary to you. I have played no part in your life. You are far from me and a stranger. Who am I to you? You have never inquired what makes up my life, what I think.

Protassoff. Have I never inquired? But. . I have no time for conversations, Lena. And why did you not speak yourself?

Elena (Proudly). I did not wish to beg like a mendicant for what is my just due as a human being and as your wife. I cannot beg, and I would not demand. Why force you?

Protassoff (In despair). How deucedly hard. How unnecessary all these misunderstandings. . explanations. . how offensive they are!

Elena. Do not excite yourself. You see, I have decided to leave you. I have firmly decided, and in my thoughts I have bidden you farewell.

Protassoff (Dumbfounded). Lena. . no! Where would you go? Why? Do you love Dimitri? Do you? Do you?

Elena. No. Not enough to want to be his wife.

Protassoff (With joy). Good. Good. But still you don't love me any more, do you? Speak, quickly, Lena?

Elena. Why do you want to know?

Protassoff (Sincerely). Ah, because I love you.

Elena. You don't mean it, Pavel. .

Protassoff (Convincingly). My word of honor, I do, Lena. But I have so little time. . Listen to me, you were not serious? I understand that you were offended. Pardon, forgive, forget. If you go, I should be worrying where you might be, what might be happening to you. And how about my work? You would cripple me, Lena. How about my work? Either to work or to think of you.

Elena. (Bitterly). Examine your words: Not a word as to myself, not one word, my friend.

Protassoff (Kneeling before her). How can you say not a word? Am I not saying that I cannot live without you? Lena, I admit I am guilty, forgive me. Do not hinder me to live. Life is brief, and it is so full of interesting labor.

Elena. But for me? What has it in store for me? (*Listening*) Wait. . (*Loud hurried steps are heard on the stairs.* PROTASSOFF jumps up in alarm. *LISA comes running down. Her eyes are wide open and filled with mortal terror. Her lips move, she makes signs with her hands, unable to speak.*)

Protassoff. Lisa, what is the matter?

Elena. Give her some water, quick.

Lisa. Stop. No. Listen. A great misfortune has just happened. Believe me, I know it. Such longing. . And suddenly. . My heart stood still like dead. . An evil has befallen. . someone. . who is very dear. .

Elena. Calm yourself. It is your imagination.
Lisa (Screaming). Believe me. Believe me. (Falls into her brother's arms.)

ACT IV

Scenery same as in Act II. Noon. Cafe noir has been served after the luncheon. ROMAN, dressed in a red peasant blouse, repairing the fence. LUSHA watching him from the porch. PROTASSOFF is heard laughing in the house.

Lusha. What province are you from?

Roman. From Kazan.

Lusha. I'm from Kaluga.

Roman. Well, what of it..

Lusha. Your face looks so terrible..

Roman (Grinning). Why terrible? You mean the beard? That's nothing. I'm a widower. Must marry again.

Lusha (Coming nearer). Yesterday at the store I heard that master is a magician.

Roman. Perhaps he is a magician.. He's a powerful smart gentleman.
Lusha. I am scared.. They're all too kind.. Too kind .. Not a bit like real gentlefolk..

Roman. Some gentry make counterfeit money, too..

Lusha. Don't say?

Roman. Well, that's nothing.. But it's hard labor if they get caught.
(PROTASSOFF and LISA come out of the house.)

Protassoff. First rate! Now drink your milk.

Lisa (Making a wry face, wearily). Why is this mujik dressed in red?

Protassoff. Because he likes it.. Do you know, Lena is such a grand, such a gifted woman..

Lisa (Stirring her milk with a spoon). Indeed?

Protassoff (Pacing up and down the porch). Yes, Lisa, she is.. Ah, the new servant girl! What is your name.

Lukeria. My name? Lukeria.

Protassoff. Lukeria, indeed. Ahem! Can you read?

Lukeria. No, sir! I know my prayers though.

Protassoff. And married?

Lukeria. No, sir.. A maiden.

Protassoff. You are fresh from your village?

Lukeria. Yes, sir.. Fresh from the village..

Protassoff. Good..Well stay with us..We are plain people. It's amusing to live with us.

Lisa (Smiling). You are always so ridiculous, Pavel.

Protassoff. Ridiculous? What of that? You know, Lisa, Lena agrees with you too..You are on the whole right..We are actually too far away from ordinary people..And we have to do something to come nearer to them. Elena spoke beautifully on this subject. So simply and yet so convincingly. I am amazed..Such treasures of mind and of heart at my very side, and I never knew it. Did not know how to make use of it..There is in me evidently something dense and limited.

Lisa. Not at all. You merely fail to notice people.

Protassoff. Yes, yes. Something is wrong..Last night, when we had put you to bed, Lena and I talked for almost three hours. Then we..sent for Dimitri..You know he..But this must not be mentioned.

Lisa. What?

Protassoff. Nothing special..Dimitri, you know, sort o' fell in love with Elena. He even spoke of the matter himself. But I don't believe him. Neither did she fully..Elena talked to him so sweetly..You know just like a wise and loving mother..And it was so touching..We all three wept. Ah, Lisa, life is so easy, so pleasant when people understand and esteem one another..We all three shall be friends..

Lisa (Bitterly). You three? But what of me?

Protassoff. You too, of course. You too. We all shall be friends, Lisa, we all shall work together and shall hoard up much treasure of thought and of feeling. Proudly conscious that we, we, have done much that is important and necessary to the world, shall we leave this life, sweetly tired, calmly reconciled to the necessity of leaving it. How grand is this, Lisa, how clear, how simple.

Lisa. I love to hear you speak like this, I love you then, and even life seems to be such as you picture it, simple and beautiful. But..when I am alone ...and I am always alone ...

Protassoff. Don't be despondent, Lisa. Yesterday you had a sudden fancy..it's only your sick nerves..

Lisa (Shuddering). Do not speak to me of sickness..Do not speak of it..Let me forget it..I must, I absolutely must..Enough, I too want to live, I have a right to live..

Protassoff. Don't excite yourself. (*ELENA enters.*) Here is Lena. Here is my Lena, my good, though somewhat strict and stern friend.

Elena. Enough..don't..(*Points significantly to LISA*).

Lisa (nervously). You love him, don't you?

Elena (In confusion). Why, of course..

Lisa. How glad I am..And I fancied..

Elena. It was hard at times..Desperately hard..The gentleman can so offend you, without noticing it himself and without wishing to do so..

Lisa (Excitedly). Wait..I too love..I love Boris Nicolaievitch..I refused him yesterday..Positively, and irrevocably. And during the evening I suddenly imagined that something, something had happened to him..Some misfortune..Something dreadful..To him. He is nearer to me than all..nearer than all of you..And last night I learned that I loved him..that I need him, and that I cannot live without him.

Nazar (Shouting in the yard). Roman..Roman..

Roman (Half aloud). What is it?

Lisa. He is so..stubborn. He is great, isn't he?

Elena (kissing her). Dear Lisa, I wish you happiness..a little happiness is so needful for us all.

Lisa. What warm lips you have..

Protassoff. Well, I congratulate..You will see this will wonderfully react on you..Normal life is so important..And Tchepurny..I like him. He is incomparably above his sister.

Nazar (Shouting). Roman, you devil!

Roman. I say, what is it?

Lisa. Now I am calm..We shall go away together, somewhere into the steppes..He so loves the steppes..We shall be all alone..He and I alone..We shall together walk over those green deserts..and all will be seen around us,—all and nothing..

Nazar (Emerging from around the corner). Roman, am I calling you or not?

Roman. I hear you, what is it?

Nazar. Blockhead! Close the gates and the doors. My respects to you, Pavel Feodorovitch. How do you do, sir?

Protassoff. Very well..Why are you locking up?

Nazar. Have you not heard? There is great agitation among the people..On account of the sickness, sir..The people think there is no sickness..but that the doctors are trying..to help their trade..

Protassoff. What utter rot..

Nazar. Of course, sir..what can you expect? The people! No wonder the expression goes: The common people..In their savagery they imagine vain things, sir..They say that there are too many doctors altogether..Then they have no work..and they are..Well in case of trouble..for the protection of property and of peace, sir..I had the gates locked..

Protassoff. Such an absurdity could not occur anywhere else but in our land..

Nazar. I should say.. I hear that they handled a doctor pretty roughly last night.

Lisa. Whom? What was his name? Do you know his name?

Nazar. No, ma'am, I don't.

Elena. Lisa, what is the matter with you? Boris Nicolaievitch is not a doctor..

Lisa. No, he is not a doctor..

Elena. Let us go. (*Leads her into the house.*)

Nazar. I must have scared the young lady, Pavel Feodorovitch. Did Mr. Tchepurny, by the way, speak to you last night?

Misha (*from behind the corner*). Papa, the contractor wants to see you. My respects, sir.

Protassoff. How do you do?

Nazar. Good day, sir.. (*Exit*).

Misha. A pleasant day, sir.. Not too warm.

Protassoff. Yes, it's a pleasant day.

Misha. May I ask you, sir.. You had a servant girl, sir.. Has she left?

Protassoff. She has.

Misha. They say she is going to marry, and a rich fellow too?

Protassoff. How do I know?

Misha. Was she an honest girl?

Protassoff. She certainly was.. Only clumsy.. Broke too many dishes.

Misha. Did she? Don't say! Ahem! Let me ask you, Pavel Feodorovitch, did my father speak to you about a chemical establishment?

Protassoff (*Surprised*). A chemical establishment? What sort of a chemical establishment?

Misha. Do you see, we have an idea : to build a chemical establishment and take you for a manager.

Protassoff. Excuse me.. What do you mean? Am I a sack? Your manner of expressing yourself is somewhat odd.

Misha. Pardon me, the gist of the matter is not in the expressions.. It lies far deeper. We, that is I and my father, have a great deal of consideration for you..

Protassoff (*dryly*). I am deeply touched..

Misha. We know about your means, and we realize that before long you may have to look out for a position. To work for others is so hard, and especially for a man like you..

Protassoff. Ahem! Perhaps you are right..

Misha. Well then, appreciating your abilities and knowledge, and seeing that you are a suitable man for a company, we have decided to make you the following proposition : draw up your estimates and specifications for the equipment of such a plant..

Protassoff. Pardon me, but I don't know anything about making estimates.. Have never done it in my life.. And as for industrial chemistry, it does not interest me in the least. I am very much obliged to you for your amiability.

Misha. Are you not interested in technology?

Protassoff. Not in the least.. It is a bore.. It is nothing for me.

Misha (Regarding him with pity). Do you speak seriously?

Protassoff. Perfectly so.

Misha. What a pity! But in my opinion you ought to think it over, and in the meanwhile I will bid you adieu. (*Exit.* ELENA coming out of the house.)

Elena (Worried.) Pavel.

Protassoff. What is it?

Elena. I fear Lisa is seriously ill.

Protassoff. She is always like this after a paroxysm. It does not amount to anything. I was just talking to that fellow, the landlord's son. Such a repulsive fellow.. Well, what do you think. He has exhibited a perfectly pathetic interest in me. He expressed it in a somewhat offensive manner, it is true, but.. he proposes to have me furnish some kind of estimates or what not..

Elena. And to use you as a tool for enriching himself? I know their intentions. The old man had been speaking to me.. Are you cold?

Protassoff. Why? Not in the least.

Elena. Why are you wearing rubbers?

Protassoff (Looks down on his feet). You are perfectly right.. Rubbers.. When could I have put them on? How strange.. I really do not know..

Elena. Perhaps the new servant handed you your shoes with the rubbers.. and you failed to notice it.

Protassoff. Very likely.. Please keep her away from me. She is such a savage.. I fear her. She will break my glassware.. Or burn herself with some acid.. I found her this morning wetting her hair with peroxide of hydrogen. She thought it some kind of toilet water. (*Grasping her hand*). Dear little girl,—you made me suffer tortures last night..

Elena. In those few moments? I had suffered for months and years.

Protassoff. Please don't..

Elena. If you knew how humiliating it is to love when you do not feel your love returned.. You made me a beggar.. compelled me to wait for attention and caresses. How mortifying.. to wait for caresses. Your soul is so serene.. your dear head is filled with such great thoughts, but it heeds so little that which is best among things that are great.. namely the people.

Protassoff. It is all over. It is gone and past, Lena.. But Dimitri.. I feel sorry for him. There goes the door bell. Ah, the gates are closed. Probably Dimitri.. I wish it were Tchepurny, for Lisa's sake, of course..

Elena (Teasing). Really, for Lisa's sake?

Protassoff. Why Lena, do you really suspect me of jealousy and so forth?

Elena (Solemnly). Certainly not. You for whom besides science..

Protassoff. Supposing I spank you, Lena, what then? (*Endeavors to kiss her. Notices MELANIE on the porch. Embarrassed. Speaks in a worried tone.*) Why, look here, Lena.. There is some down on your shoulder..

Melanie (Smiling guiltily). Good morning..

Protassoff (With exaggerated joy). Melanie Nicolaievna.. So long since I have seen you..

Melanie. So very long? I was here yesterday.. Have you forgotten.

Protassoff. Oh yes, that's so. No, I have not forgotten.

Melanie. And I was afraid that you would poke fun at me for my behavior of yesterday.

Protassoff (Hurriedly). No, no. That was mere nonsense. (*Correcting himself.*) That is, I wanted to say that might have happened to anybody. (*Completely confused*).

Elena. You had better say nothing, Pavel..

Melanie (Sadly and lovingly). Ah, you..

Protassoff. Yes, you are right. I will say nothing. I'll go and take off my rubbers. What did she mean by putting them on my shoes?

Melanie (Smiling sadly). Listen to him: Mere nonsense. I opened my whole heart to him, and he.. and he.. says it might have happened to anybody, as if I had stepped on his corn..

Elena. Do not be offended, Melanie Nicolaievna!

Melanie (Feelingly). Could I feel offended at his words? I have not slept a wink all night, but paced the floor and wondered how I had dared to speak to him. But do you know, I really had thought that I could tempt him with money. Who can withstand the temptation of wealth, I thought, but he was not tempted.

Elena. Forget it. . (*LISA comes in walking slowly.*) What is it, Lisa?

Lisa (Yearningly). Is not Boris Nicolaievitch here?

Elena. No, he has not come yet.

Lisa. Not yet. . (*Returns to her rooms.*)

Melanie. She did not even greet me. . And how pale she is. .

Elena. She had a paroxysm last night. .

Melanie. Again? Poor girl. . Now you tell me to forget. No, I shall never forget. . I must not forget. . For if I did, I might do something foolish again. Ah, my dear, what a miserable bit of a woman I am! So shameless, so corrupt. And my thoughts, few as they are, are not straight thoughts but like worms, wiggling about in all directions. I don't want those thoughts, I don't want them. I long to be decent. . I must be decent. . See how much evil I am capable of doing. .

Elena. If you want to be, you will be. . What a hard and misshapen life you have lived. You must rest and forget the past.

Melanie. Yes, I had it hard. . God knows it. . How they beat me. I do not pity my body or my cheeks. . I pity my soul. . They malformed my soul. They soiled my heart. It is so difficult for me to have faith in that which is good, but what is life without faith? Look at Boris. He laughs at everything, he believes in nothing. What is he? Homeless like a dog. . Look, you believed me at once. I was surprised. . I thought that you were deceiving me. . But you comforted me, revealed me to myself. .

Elena. Enough, my dear. .

Melanie. And how sweetly, how simply you. . You were right. . It was not the woman in me that loved him, but the human being. . I had never felt anything human within, and I had no faith in the human.

Elena. I am so glad you understood me. .

Melanie. I did at once. . And yet I had to try and see if I could not acquire the cute little nobleman. . Ah, what a low, mean woman I was. .

Elena. Please do not speak of yourself like that. You must respect yourself. You cannot live without self respect. I long to comfort you. .

Melanie. Yes, comfort me. . Throw some alms for the sake of Christ to the wealthy tradeswoman. .

Elena. Don't say such things, don't. . and don't cry.

Melanie. Never mind, Elena Nicolaievna. . Let my soul wash itself clean. . Comfort me. . Teach me to do something good. . You are so clever. . You can do it. . (*LISA enters.*) Lisaveta Feodorovna, how do you do?

Lisa (Extending her hand in silence). Hasn't he come yet, Elena?

Elena. No, what is the matter with you?

Lisa. Hasn't he?

Elena. Do you feel bad?

Lisa. No, nothing. . Merely my longing. . Not yet? (Goes into the garden.)

Melanie. For whom is she waiting?

Elena. For Boris Nicolaievitch. . Do you know they are engaged?

Melanie. Heavens, no. . Are they? And we are to be relatives, Pavel Feodorovitch and I? And you, too? Ah, Boris. . And Lisa is so sweet a girl. . I must go to her, may I?

Elena. Please do. .

Melanie. How things do come about. . Why this is very, very nice. Let me kiss you. . (Antonovna comes out.) I shall go into the garden to see her. How do you do, nurse, how are you, dear? (Goes into the garden.)

Antonovna. How do you do, ma'am! That new servant, the goose. . why doesn't she clear the table? Fancy getting a servant through an employment office. . Who ever heard of such a thing? A servant must be hired personally, not through an office.

Elena (Laying her hand on her shoulder). Don't grumble, nurse; it is such a beautiful day.

Antonovna. What of it? Isn't spring the time for warm days? But order must be kept anyhow. . That new girl drank a whole urnful of tea last night. . Just like a horse. .

Elena. You don't grudge her some water, do you?

Antonovna. Not the water, but just think of the sugar. . (Returns into the house carrying away some things from the table, VAGHIN enters.)

Elena. Good morning, sir knight!

Vagbin (Embarrassed). May I kiss your hand?

Elena. Why not?

Vagbin (Sighing). Ah, so. .

Elena. How you sigh, you poor martyr. .

Vagbin (Riled). When I look at you, do you know what thought occurs to me?

Elena. No. . But I am curious to know. .

Vagbin. You used me to have Pavel's gracious attention drawn to yourself. . A neat trick. .

Elena. How chivalrous. ' You used me.' ' A neat trick.'

Vagbin (Bitterly). You taught me a lesson. . Just like a schoolboy. .

Elena (Earnestly). Dimitri Sergheievitch. . I hate to listen to nonsense.

Vagbin (Thoughtfully and openly). I feel that I had acted rather a stupid part. . And it hurts me. . I don't feel well, anyhow. . after our conversation last night. . There seems to be a disturbance in my head. . Tell me the truth, Elena Nicolaievna. .

Elena. Must you specially make this stipulation?

Vagbin. I want to ask you : were you never strongly drawn to me?

Elena. As to a person of the opposite sex never. . As to a human being, I still really and deeply am fond of you.

Vagbin (Smiling). Is this to be considered as flattering? I do not understand people. . I don't understand them. As for me, I love you all in one. I felt and realized last night that the woman and the human being are indissolubly united into one beautiful harmonious whole. I was ashamed of myself and pitied myself. . And last night I learned to love you. .

Elena (Annoyed). Again the same story? Why bring it up?

Vagbin (Frankly and persistently). Yes, I learned to love you. . For ever. I do not ask anything of you. . I even probably shall marry and the rest. Such is the custom. But I shall always love you. Always. And no more of it. . It must begin to bore you. .

Elena. I have faith in you. . I believe you are speaking the truth.

Vagbin. And have you never until this moment felt that I spoke the truth, never?

Elena (With a gentle smile). No, never. . How did it all happen? Once, losing my reserve, I complained to you of being lonely. You treated my confidence so sweetly, so simply, so immaculately. This evoked in me a feeling of sincere and profound gratitude to you. And mark you, then, and not until then you commenced to speak of love. .

Vagbin (Musingly). Not until then? It must have offended you.

Elena (With a smile). I don't know. . It might have a little. .

Vagbin (With annoyance and sadly). No, I am not a genius, to say the least. I am stupid. . I don't understand people.

Elena. Let us drop all this and remain good friends.

Vagbin. Shall we shake hands on it?

Elena. Give me your head. (*Kisses his forehead.*) Be free. Freedom is as necessary for the artist as talent and brains. Be truthful. And do not have such bad views of women.

Vagbin (Touched, but with reserve). Dear friend, this last remark was not needed. You spoke the truth : The artist must be lonely. Freedom is loneliness, is it not?

Elena. Probably it is, my friend.

Vagbin. Pavel is coming. . I hear his absurd footsteps.
(PROTASSOFF enters). I salute you, rival.

Protassoff. Has Melanie Nicolaievna gone?

Elena. She is out in the garden, with Lisa. . Shall I call her.

Protassoff. None of your tricks, now. . What do you think? Our new servant girl is eating soap. . I saw her unpack some bars, hide the paper in her pocket and take a lick at the soap. .

Elena. Do you really mean it? (Goes into the house.)

Vagbin. Don't bother her. . Let everyone be happy in his own fashion. As for me, I have just made another declaration of love to Elena Nicolaievna. .

Protassoff (worriedly). Ahem! I think, Dimitri, you want to go on a trip. . It will then all pass away. . But do not worry. .

Vagbin. I shall go on a voyage. Though I know it will not pass away. As for not worrying, take the advice yourself.

Protassoff. I don't need it. . But it is a bit awkward, you know.

Vagbin. Is it awkward to be happy? The sentiment does you honor, though it is somewhat stupid. .

Protassoff. Do not be angry with me, Dimitri. . It is. . Lena. . It is not my fault. . If she loves me and not you. .

Vagbin (Smiling). How neat. .

Protassoff. You very much depressed me last night. . You are so much better than I. Yes, yes. I am a planet with an indefinite orbit. . revolving around myself and hurrying somewhere into space. . and that's all. But you revolve around the sun. . You fit into the harmony of things.

(LISA returning from the garden; MELANIE following her; ELENA enters coming out of the house.)

Vagbin. How I revolve I don't know. . But I advise you to revolve around your wife and not to lose sight of her.

Protassoff. How good people are, though. .

Lisa. Hasn't he come yet?

Elena. No, my dear. . Shall I send for him?

Lisa. No, don't. (Goes into the house.)

Melanie (Softly and with concern). Heavens. . I think she talks out of her mind. . About steppes and deserts. .

Lisa (Calling from her rooms). Melanie Nicolaievna. . Where are you?

Melanie (Rushing to her). I am coming. .

Elena. Pavel, I am really worried about her. . We must call a doctor. .

Protassoff. All right, I shall go for him..

Antonovna (Enters). A letter for you, Dimitri Sergheievitch..

Vagbin. From where?

Antonovna. From your residence, sir.. Wanted immediately (*Exit.*)

Vagbin. What the dickens.. (*Opens the letters and reads it.*)

The devil! Friends.. Tchepurny.. Just listen..

Elena. Hush, hush.. Lisa.. What is the matter?

Vagbin (Agitated). When he left me last night he was smiling and joking. Joking, as I live.. And now, listen to him: (*Reads, relapsing involuntarily into the Little-Russian accent of Tchepurny.*) 'Here is the other anecdote: a veterinary surgeon hanging himself! Just in order to keep up the reputation of his profession like that Englishman. Thank you for sketching me. It is a pleasure to know that you leave even a trace of your features somewhere. Pay more attention to the appearance of your neckties. It is an important matter. Tchepurny.'

Protassoff. This must be a joke..

Elena. Hush.. What does he mean by the anecdote? Who is it? Perhaps it is some joke?

Vagbin. Well hardly.. And he had been laughing, too, the devil take it!

Lisa (Enters rapidly, looks around with a searching glance). Has he come? Where is he?

Elena. He has not come yet..

Lisa. But the voice.. His voice? I just heard his voice? Why are you silent? Where is he?

Vagbin. It was I. I was talking..

Lisa. No, no, it was his voice..

Vagbin. I tried to imitate him, to ape him..

Lisa. Why?

Vagbin. Just so..

Protassoff. You see we had been chatting.. and suddenly..

Lisa. What? Suddenly what?

Elena. Calm yourself, Lisa..

Vagbin. I remembered his manner and his accent and said a few words imitating his voice..

Lisa. Did you? Are you telling the truth? Why don't they speak? Pavel, what is the matter with you? What has happened? tell me. Dear Pavel, you don't know how to lie.. Tell me. What has happened? (*VAGHIN slips into the house unobserved.*)

Protassoff. No, Lisa.. As a matter of fact, you see.. it is the truth.. It was Dimitri speaking..

Elena. Listen, dear Lisa..

Lisa. Elena, don't touch me.. Pavel, you must tell me..

Protassoff. I don't know anything..

Lisa. What is there to be known? Elena send for him.. Send for Boris.. At once..

Elena. I shall, at once. Calm yourself..

Lisa. Ah, but I somehow think you are lying.. Where is Vaghin? He is talking to Boris' sister.. And her face.. Her face.. .

Protassoff (Whispering to his wife). What is to be done?

Elena (Answering in a whisper). Call a doctor.. at once..

Lisa. I shall fall.. Hold me, Lena.. I shall fall.. Why are you whispering?

Elena. Just telling him how to calm you.. Pavel..

Lisa. Where is he running? Elena, for God's sake.. Look straight into my eyes.. Do not lie, Elena, I implore you.. (*MELANIE comes out of the house, followed by VAGHIN*). Where are you going? Where is he, your brother? Boris?

Melanie. I don't know..

Lisa. Break it to me at once.. Tell me.. Tell me is he dead?

Melanie. I don't know.. I don't know.. (*Goes towards the gate*.)

Lisa. No.. No.. No.. Tell me something.. My heart is breaking.. If he died.. It was I who killed him.. Ah, no.

Vaghin. Pardon me, what an idea..

Misha (Comes running towards the porch. Shouts with almost pleasurable animation). Gentlemen, do you know.. Tchepurny, the veterinary surgeon..

Vaghin. (Threatening him with his fist). Shut up, you!

Misha. Hung himself..

Lisa (Frees herself from ELENA's embrace and speaking with a calm and distinct voice). Last night, at about nine?

Melanie. Yes, that's right.. In the bush near the river. And I thought I was telling you the truth..

Lisa (Glances around with wide open eyes. She speaks in a low tone, with a strangely solemn voice). I knew it.. You remember, Lena.. I felt it.. (*whispering in an awestricken tone*). No. No. It was not I. Tell me that it was not I who killed him.. No (*screaming*) I did not want it.. No.

(*VAGHIN and ELENA pick her up and carry her inside. She struggles and screams in an ever increasing tempo the one word: 'No.'* ROMAN peeps

lazily from around the corner. LUSHA comes running out very much frightened).

Lusha. I say, you from Riasan. . What are they doing?

Roman. Who? What?

Lusha. They are dragging the young lady away, and she keeps screaming: 'No.'

Roman. Was that her screaming?

Lusha. Yes. . and they dragged her away. . I am so scared. .

Roman (indifferently). Well, what is she screaming about?

Lusha. I don't know. . Who'd have thought that of such gentlefolk. .

Roman. Well, she shouldn't scream. . It's disorderly.

Misha (hurriedly entering from around the corner). Who was it screaming?

Roman (pointing to Lusha). It's in their house. .

Lusha. Don't blame it on me. . It's the gentlefolk. .

Misha (sternly). Who was it screaming?

Lusha. The young lady.

Misha. Why?

Lusha. They were dragging her away. .

Misha. Who?

Lusha. They. . on the porch. .

Misha (slapping her shoulder). You blockhead. (Goes up on the porch. ANTONOVNA runs into him). What happened, nurse?

Antonovna. Young lady had a fit. .

Misha (to the PORTER and to LUSHAN). Now you know, . . you devils. What was the cause?

Antonovna. The Lord's will. . It comes all from the Lord. .

Misha (with a knowing smile). Perhaps from the veterinary surgeon? (Disappears smiling contentedly. ANTONOVNA looks at him reproachfully and speaks with a tone of pity). Young fool. . Lukeria, what are you doing here? Go inside. .

Lusha. What kind of a fit was it, nurse? 'Pileptic'?

Antonovna. Yes, yes. . You better go. .

Lusha. 'Pileptic' is nothing. Seen it myself. . But didn't I get scared though when they dragged her away.

(ROMAN humming a song and working. . VAGHIN enters frowning. He paces up and down the porch, eying ROMAN. Suddenly stops, pulls out his sketchbook and begs pencil).

Vagbin. I say, old chap. .

Roman. That's me. .

Vagbin. Stay a moment. .

Roman. What for?

Vagbin (sketching). I want to draw your picture. .

Roman. Don't say. No harm in that?

Vagbin. A piece of money.

Roman. That's all right then. .

Vagbin. Raise your head some. .

Roman (raising his head very high). As you say. .

Vagbin. Here, here, a little lower. .

Roman. Did you take a fancy to me?

Vagbin (through his teeth). Ah well, you'll do. . (A pause. . A moan is heard occasionally in the house. A confused noise is heard in the distance outside. MELANIE enters.)

Vagbin. Well, what?

Melanie (listlessly). I saw him. . So dreadful. . Blue. . With his tongue out. As if mocking you. . So dreadful. . How is Lisa?

Vagbin (sullenly). Can't you hear?

Melanie. What is this coming on? And it had been so splendid.

Vagbin. What do you mean by saying 'coming on'?

Melanie. I don't know. . I don't understand anything. . I only feel terror. . And you are sketching? How can you?

Vagbin. And you are breathing? Can't do without breathing? All right, old chap. . Here's your money. (Throws a coin at ROMAN's feet.)

Melanie. Is Elena Nicolaievna alone there? I must go to her, for she may need me. . O Lord. . I have to bury Boris. . And haven't made any arrangements yet. Just looked at him and hurried back. There is some kind of a disturbance in the street, too. People are running to and fro, excited, but I couldn't make it out at all. His blue face and his tongue are ever before me and seem to mock me. (Weeping goes into the house.)

Roman (pleased). Look — a lady — and crying.

Vagbin. Her brother is dead.

Roman. Ah. . Well that's good cause. But our women folk cry a lot without cause. . Punch her face and she cries. (The noise in the street has become louder and nearer. Hoarse shouts are heard. Somewhere in the yard MISHA's frightened voice is heard calling for ROMAN.) You wait. It sounds like a fire. Or perhaps they're beating some one. Must be a thief. It's a hard life a thief has on earth. I think I shall go and have a look. .

(ELENA enters. . VAGHIN looks at her inquiringly.)

Elena (Greatly agitated). She will hardly ever recover.

Vagbin. Don't.. This is not the first time with her..

Elena. But this is something new.. She has shown the cunning peculiar to insanity. At first she begged for poison. Then she grew oddly calm.. but in her eyes glowed the cunning of a wild animal.

Vagbin. Shall I give you some water?

Elena. No, thank you.. She lay down.. Then she said that I worried her. I stepped into the next room.. Suddenly I heard how she softly walked over to Pavel's desk. He keeps a revolver in a drawer there.. Here it is. I fought with her. She scratched my hands like a wildcat. She was like a wild animal.

Vagbin. The devil.. And you did not call me? Did not shout?

Elena. I can't explain how it was we did not shoot one another. She is lying down now.. We bound her. The maid helped me.. The nurse looked on and wept.. She begged us not to touch her.. A general's daughter! What an uproar. What is all this? It is right near us.

Vagbin. The porter went to see what it is about.

Elena. Isn't Pavel back yet? What is it? (*A tumult is heard outside the gates. Hoarse shouts can be distinguished: 'Hold him! 'Ab-ab-ab!' 'Over the fence!' 'Look out, fellows.' 'Hit back, will you?' 'Kill him!'*)

Elena (Alarmed). Merciful Heavens, let us go there.

Vagbin. Let me go alone.. (*A PHYSICIAN, batless and showing signs of rough treatment, appears on the scene, rushing towards the porch from behind the corner.*)

Physician. Hide me.. Lock the doors..

Elena. What is the matter with you, doctor?

Physician. A riot.. They've destroyed the hospital barracks.. Caught me just outside the gates here.. (*VAGHIN rushes to the gates.*)

Elena. Take a revolver with you..

Physician. They will break down the gates and get me..

Elena (Leads him into the house). Come in here, quick. Nurse, nurse. (*A great hubbub outside the gates; it is broken down. There is a sound of shattered glass. PROTASSOFF appears assailed by a dozen peasants. He defends himself with his hat and handkerchief, which seems to amuse the mob, and many of them laugh.*)

Protassoff. Asses! Idiots! Be off!

First rioter. Punch my face with the handkerchief.

Second rioter. You hit him with your hat, sir!

Third (wrathfully). I'll teach you to call me names..

Second rioter. Where is the doctor, mates?

Third rioter. This man is a doctor, too.

Vaghin's voice. (Somewhere around the corner). Shut the doors. Porter, chase the crowd out.

Protassoff. Don't you dare push me, you fool.

Vaghin. Pavel, Pavel. Stop, people. I shall strike. Get out everybody. (YEGOR and YAKOV TROSHIN appear on the scene. YEGOR slightly intoxicated, TROSHIN quite drunk. YEGOR throws himself on PROTASSOFF and seizes him by his collar.)

Yegor. Ah, you chemist, you're caught!

Protassoff (Pushing him away). Don't you dare..

Yegor. Mates, here's the chief of the magicians.. He makes medicines..

Protassoff. You lie, you fool. I don't make any medicines. Here.. Help.. *A voice in the crowd.* 'Shout louder, nobody hears you'.... (ELENA rushes out on the porch, sees the scrimmage, draws the revolver and hurries to her husband's aid.)

Elena. Yegor, let go. Off with you, Yegor.

Protassoff. Lena.. Lena..

Yegor. Do you remember: 'Cholera!' That means let her die! Do you remember how you..

Elena. I shall kill you..

(ELENA's appearance astonishes the crowd. 'Look at her' 'And a pistol, too.' 'Hit her!' You go first! 'What d'you think of her?')

Yegor. Lady, I have lost my wife.. I'm a widower.

Elena. I shall shoot..

Yegor. You too shall be a widow.. I will strangle him.

(ELENA shoots. ROMAN appeared a few moments previously, and is seen behind the knot of people surrounding YEGOR. He has a large club in his hand. Very methodically he raises it and showers powerful blows on the heads of the people. He goes about his work quietly, with concentration and without a show of irritation. Simultaneously with ELENA's shot he brings down YEGOR with his club, PROTASSOFF being drawn down in his opponent's embrace. ELENA advances towards the crowd, threatening it with her weapon. After the shot the attitude of the mob undergoes a decided change. Some one exclaims in surprise: 'She's been and shot him.' 'Look, he's fallen.' 'The witch!' One man runs away shouting: 'They're killing us, mates.' Another runs away after him exclaiming: 'She's only a woman. Don't be scared.' Almost all the rioters retreat.)

Elena. Off! I shall shoot again! Dimitri, where are you? Roman, help my husband. Off, you brutes..

(ROMAN advances to TROSHIN who is sitting near YEGOR and strikes him with his club. He falls. VAGHIN rushes in, with disarranged attire, and witnesses ROMAN's deed.)

Vagbin (with a brick in his hand). What the deuce are you..

Roman. What's wrong?

Vagbin. Elena, where is Pavel?

(ROMAN drops his club and kneels near PROTASSOFF.)

Elena (Coming to herself). He? He fell..(Screams). He is dead.

Vagbin. Impossible..

Melanie (Hearing ELENA's cry). Who is dead? You lie..

Elena (Pointing the revolver at YEGOR). It was he..I shall..

Vagbin (Knocks the revolver from her hands). What are you doing?
Calm yourself.

Melanie (Near PROTASSOFF). He lives..Pavel Feodorovitch.

Elena. Water..water quick..

Vagbin (To MELANIE). Go and fetch some water. Elena, calm yourself. (MELANIE rushes into the house).

Roman. Why, they are all alive..See'em move? You can hit 'em far worse than that and not kill 'em. (VAGHIN and ELENA lift PAVEL. He had fainted. ROMAN shakes TROSHIN.)

Elena (Terrified). Pavel..Pavel..

Vagbin. He merely fainted.

Roman. Here, you get up..No fooling..Or I'll knock you on the head again.

Antonovna (Running). Pavel, dear..Where is Pavel?

Vagbin. Don't shout, nurse..

Protassoff (Semi-consciously). Lena, is it you? Have they run away?
Ah!

Antonovna (To ELENA). They've killed him..Couldn't you have saved him? Hay?

Elena. Are you hurt? Where, dear?

(YEGOR regains consciousness and groans.)

Antonovna. Lift him..Carry him in..

Melanie (Bringing water). He has come to. My Lord, drink..
Drink..

Elena. Tell me..Where do you feel pain? Were you much hurt?

Protassoff. I feel no pain..That..that..tried to strangle me, that was all. (Regaining full consciousness.) Lena, and you? I fancied some one had struck you on the head..Some kind of a club..

Elena. No, no, calm yourself..

Vagbin. Were you struck?

Protassoff. No, not much.. Just some body blows, the devil take them. And the doctor, is he alive?

Melanie. Yes, alive, in the parlor, on the sofa. Crying.

Elena (Noticing ANTONOVNA, frightened). Nurse—where is Lisa?

Antonovna. I unbound her. Could not see her tied..

Elena. Where is she? Where?

Antonovna (With tears). There.. Her dress was all torn.. I've changed her dress.

Vagbin. What is she doing?

Antonovna. Keeps looking at his picture..

Elena. Please go to her, nurse, please do.

Antonovna. Pavel ought to be put to bed. (Goes, looking back.)

Protassoff. I'm all right, old woman. Only a scare..

Melanie. My darling..

(*YEGOR, ROMAN and TROSHIN compose another group. ROMAN is somewhat more vivacious than usually.*)

Protassoff. I? Not a bit. I was afraid for her. I fancied some one had fired a shot and then some one struck out with a scantling or a club.

Elena (Proudly). No one touched me.. Let us go into the house.

Protassoff. I very successfully defended myself. Pity you did not see it, Elena. And you, Lena, it was a pity too I had taken off my rubbers in the morning.. I would have hit them with my rubbers.

Vagbin (Smiling). You see he has fully recovered.

Protassoff (Excitedly). Hit their stupid mugs with my rubbers. (To *YEGOR*). And as for you, sir..

Melanie. What is the use of talking to him? Come in and rest.

Protassoff. Pardon me, but..

Elena. Wait.. Yegor.. Did I wound you?

Yegor (Hoarsely). No.. Somebody knocked me on the head..

Roman (Proudly). I did it..

(*ELENA looks searchingly at YEGOR and the rest of the group.*)

Vagbin. If you had seen this somber automat at work. It was something fearful.

Troshin. Ladies and gentlemen.. I too have suffered contusions on my cranium.

Roman (Triumphantlly). It was I again..

Troshin. Ladies and gentlemen, you are witnesses..

(*YEGOR comes towards him and pulls out smilingly a bottle.*)

Elena (looking fixedly at YEGOR). Yegor, will you have some water?

Yegor. Vodka would suit me better.

Protassoff (to YEGOR). You are fearfully stupid, sir. .

Elena. Leave him, Pavel. .

Protassoff. I have never made any medicines, sir. . The devil take you. .

Vagbin. Drop that, Pavel. .

Protassoff (almost in tears). But wait, I want to know, why he attacked me. What did I ever do to you, Yegor?

Yegor (boarsely). I don't know. . Don't know anything. .

Melanie. You'll know in the Court. The judge will tell you, my friend. .

Protassoff. Why courts? Perfectly unnecessary. . I valued you so highly, Yegor. You were such an excellent workman. . You certainly were. . Did I not pay you well? Why then?

Yegor (rising; boarsely and with hatred). Don't touch me, master.

Elena (firmly). Pavel, I beg you to leave him alone.

Vagbin (to YEGOR). You better go. .

Yegor (impudently). All right, I'll go. (*He goes; in the meanwhile ROMAN has brought some liquor, and sitting down with TROSHIN they drink. YEGOR joins the group, extending his hand to ROMAN.*)

Melanie. What a brute.

Elena. Don't touch him. . Let us go, Pavel.

Protassoff (agitated). But he has roused my indignation. . There is something repulsive in him. . People should be serene and radiant. . like the sun. .

(*LISA appears on the porch. She is dressed in white. Her hair is combed quaintly and becomingly. She walks slowly and solemnly. A dim, mysterious smile seems to have grown rigid on her lips. ANTONOVNA follows her.*)

Lisa. Good-bye. Don't say a word. I have decided. I am going. . No, no objections. . I am going far away and for ever. . Do you know? Listen: (*She reads the verses written on the back of TCHEPURNY's photograph.*)

Love, I see you walking in the desert,

In the arid ocean of red sand. .

In the dim and mist-enveloped distance

Nothing but the desert waits for you.

And the sun looks down in glowing silence

Like some monster's evil meaning eye.

Wait, I come. . and we shall go together. .

For too hard and lonely is your path.

(Humming a quaint melody.)

My dearest is tall and stately,
And I am fair and lithe. .
And like two pretty flowers
We were cast on the crimson sand. .

(Sighs. Begins to read again).

We two shall go far through the desert,
We shall march o'er the burning sand.
In its depths his dreams he will bury,
And I will bury my grief.

(Looks pensively around. Smiles). That's all. I composed it for Boris. Do you know Boris? No? (Goes into the garden.) I feel very sorry for you. I feel very sorry for you. . (ANTONOVNA eyes ELENA with a hostile glance, and follows her.)

Elena (sadly and gently). Pavel. . Pavel. . Do you understand this? Protassoff (in surprise). How sweetly she speaks. . Dimitri, do you understand this? How beautiful that was!

Vagbin (cruelly). And do you understand that she has gone insane?

Protassoff (incredulously). Impossible. . Has she, Lena?

Elena (softly). Let us go. . Let us go after her. . (PROTASSOFF, ELENA and VAGHIN go into the garden. YEGOR sits near the fence and watches them with sullen hatred. TROSHIN mumbles something, feeling his head and shoulders with trembling hands.)

Roman. That's nothing. . I was beaten worse than this. . Look at me to-day! Therefore hold your tongue. . Be glad you are living. .

Vagbin (pensively). Alone. . in the desert. .

In the arid sea of red sand. . .

GREAT POETS OR GREAT POEMS

BY W. H. CARRUTH

OME young people of Topeka attempted to effect a settlement of their doubts and fears in the matter of literary values by writing recently to the leading living authors, propounding to each the question: Who is the greatest living American writer?

Although the Topeka high school library is enriched by some interesting autograph letters from a number of celebrities, the direct answers to the question proposed were few and full of trouble. Modesty, of course, embarrassed some of the writers, but there was a certain sameness in the manner of evading the direct answer from which we may derive a hook whereon to hang some cast-off reflections.

The reason alleged by many of the witnesses for not pointing out the highest peak among the literary hills (there was a general agreement that there are no literary mountains now in sight) was, that we are too near at hand, and the wellworn simile of the foot-hills which hide the mountains from view was applied with an apparent confidence that it settled the matter and relieved the writer from further responsibility.

But this would not be the first case of its kind, if it were found that the figure of speech demonstrated its difference from mathematical figures by obscuring the truth. Is it true that contemporaries are largely or wholly unable to estimate properly the qualities of a great writer? We should be able to furnish both *a priori* and *a posteriori* evidence in answer to this question.

In the first place, we must endeavor to see whether there is any general agreement as to what constitutes a great writer. If we find that we can't state clearly the conditions of greatness, we may then inquire whether there is anything in the nature of these conditions to make them recognizable only through a vista of time and apart from their surroundings. And then, if we find that there are some authors who are unanimously placed in this category, we may examine whether these were generally misjudged and ignored by their own times. On the other hand, we may inquire to what extent writers now generally admitted to be of little value, mediocre, insignificant, anything but great, received the general acclaim

of greatness at the hands, or should we say at the mouth, of their contemporaries.

It is easy to obscure reason with words, and if I succeeded in satisfying myself with a statement of what constitutes greatness in a writer, there is every probability that each one who reads it would dissent in some respect, or would put his own subjective measure upon it, and we should not be much nearer a common understanding than before.

But it is not so difficult to deal with concrete terms. If asked to name the great poets of the world there would probably be no difficulty in agreeing upon Homer, David, Vergil, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe and — what name can I add from a later time to which there will not be some demurrer, or if not a demurrer, a demand that this one and that one be also included, as equally entitled to the distinction?

Now what is there in the work of these six poets that places them beyond the reach of competition? And what is the nature of the agreement by which they are thus placed out of the race and beyond cavil or question? Who are the judges that determine this award?

Plainly not all mankind. Plainly not even all mankind who can read. Surely not all those who read verse. Not even all those who appreciate what even the most critical will admit to be good poetry. If it would not be cruel to point an argument at the readers of this magazine themselves: How many of them, of their own firsthand acquaintance and in accordance with their own taste, would rank these six poets as unquestionably above all others? And if this same question could be put privately and secretly to all the critics and poetry lovers and literary producers of the world, how large do you suppose the vote would be for these six greatest poets?

Whatever our answer to this question of probability, and whatever our reflections upon these considerations, I am sure that the result of such a private consensus would satisfy us that the unquestioned rank of these six greatest poets of the world is more a matter of tradition and convention than we had believed, even though we be all willing to admit that a great measure of tradition affects the unanimous vote for the six.

And when we had sifted out the comparatively small number who really of their own knowledge and their own preference give to these six the precedence, is it at all likely that the rest of the semi-savage world, or even of the semi-cultured world, would admit that this small number included those the best fitted to judge in the case?

It would not be quite fair, however, to leave this phase of the subject without giving a hearing to those who believe that it is possible to state

in general terms the conditions of greatness for a poet. And I suppose that such statements would amount to about this: A great poet is one who has depicted some considerable and universal phase of human life in its ethical and esthetic relations, and in form and language that gratify the ear and satisfy the heart of men in all ages and climes. But whether the definition were this or another, there would be no end of disputing about the terms of it, and as to whether this or that poet fulfilled its terms.

By quite general consent, I believe, no author of a single short poem, no matter how fine, is regarded as a great poet. But the question may well be raised whether this is a rational ground for a distinction of such import. Are we justified in estimating our great poets quantitatively? If Blanco White's sonnet 'To Night' is as fine and noble as anything in Shakespeare, why is not White a great poet? And this opens up another question. Not every great poet's work is uniformly great. Homer sometimes nods, as well as his readers. I think Dante even snores. A Harvard professor confesses that Milton bores him with 'Paradise Lost,' but makes distinctions in that poet's work, finding 'Lycidas' spontaneous and 'Comus' and 'L'Allegro' jolly good rhetoric. Some of Shakespeare's plays are not good enough for Shakespeare and have to be saddled upon his now defenceless contemporaries. Even within the best plays there are portions which we willingly slur over and do not miss when the stage version omits them — though to tell the truth it is more apt to be the fine passages that are cut by the stage.

A great poet, then, is not uniformly great, and may have written poems that are far from great. Would it not be wiser, then, to speak of great poems rather than of great poets? There are great poems the authors of which are unknown. The historians of literature call these 'folk poetry', as though the collective folk had written them. But a poem always springs from the heart of an individual. The people, however, do not care for the individual; they care for his poem, and they take it to their hearts and hearths and make it their own. Such poems are rarely long; they 'gush from the heart, like showers from the clouds of summer.' Poe declared, and with some show of reason, that a long poem is an impossibility. The so-called great long poems are really a patch-work of short great poems with prosy interludes.

But to return to the question first raised, as to whether contemporaries are unable to detect great poets: accepting the conventional rating of the six poets who are recognized as the greatest, what light will the facts of their contemporary reception throw upon the answer?

Of Homer I suppose there is no means of knowing to what extent he

was admired by his own time. The legend of his begging bread throughout the cities of Greece would indicate a lack of appreciation, while on the other hand the very fact that his work was preserved for several centuries by reciters who had to memorize it all seems to indicate a very high regard. His contemporaries would scarcely have set themselves the task of committing to memory his twenty-odd thousand lines unless they had been filled with a strong conviction that they were thus preserving something of extraordinary value.

Vergil certainly had in Augustus one admirer whose appreciation and support were worth more than would have been the plaudits of many thousands of the populace. But the popular applause, too, was not lacking, and Vergil, though perhaps the least worthy of our six, was certainly recognized as great in his own day.

Inasmuch as Dante's greatest work, the one on which chiefly his claim to greatness rests, was finished only in the year of his death, the question of general contemporary recognition must in his case be laid on the table. Yet we know that he was not without admirers who regarded him as destined to immortality, since Guido da Polenta, his latest patron and friend, contemplated building a monument in his honor.

Strangely enough, evidence is more scarce than we might expect in the case of one so near to us as Shakespeare. However, we know that some of his most competent contemporaries, as Ben Jonson, esteemed him as the greatest of that goodly company of Elizabethan dramatists, of whom Jonson himself was not least. A very interesting study by Mr. E. P. Morton, of the University of Indiana, shows from the records of theatres and other sources that Shakespeare's plays were given in the first part of the seventeenth century much more frequently than some have supposed and probably more than those of any other dramatist.

Of all the six, Goethe received probably the most prompt, the most general and the most unstinted recognition in his own time. We are aided in his case by his nearness and the abundance of printed evidence to prove how almost uncontested was his claim to a seat on the world's Parnassus, how near he came to being deified alive. It is interesting to note that Goethe is the only one of the six who appealed to the wide general public on which now every poet depends and by means of the printed page. Shakespeare reached his public chiefly from the stage and all the others through oral recital and the restricted medium of manuscripts.

It does not appear from this survey that the world is convicted of inability to recognize a good thing in contemporary poetry when it sees, or hears, it. If we come further down and consider some of those who

would be the next choice of moderns for association with the select company of the divine six: Byron, Hugo, Heine, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, Shelley, and, in our smaller American sphere, Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier and Holmes, the conclusion offered from that first survey is only confirmed. Byron and all the rest of these, except Browning, received early recognition as among the first poets of their time and of the world.

On the other hand, we shall find that individuals and sections and classes have often made egregious blunders for short periods in according the highest rank to poets whose works were of so little worth that even the names of the writers are now forgotten. 'You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time' in literature as well as in other lines. In view of this fact an individual may well hesitate about issuing a certificate of immortality on his own sole responsibility.

Yet it appears that in general when there is an almost unanimous verdict of approval lasting over the generation of a fad — from two to ten years, I should guess — the verdict will stand the test of time and change. Therefore competent readers should by no means hesitate to pronounce their preferences among their contemporaries in literature and art, for by the consensus of such preferences just verdicts are formed and wise guidance is given to those who are forced to limit themselves to the best.

Backed by these reflections one may urge upon the reading public, or perhaps it would be better to say the thinking public, a more serious consideration of certain minor poets than the shifting kaleidoscope of the monthly magazines has permitted, and this even in the face of the admonition to devote our time and energy to the 'few immortal names that were not born to die.'

I suppose a consensus of the reading people of the average small town on their favorite American poets would scarcely reveal the name of E. R. Sill, not even if the number of poets to be included were quite large. It is altogether possible that there is a large percentage of the reading people of many American towns who have never heard of Mr. Sill. Of those who do know his name, probably few would be disposed to rank him as a great poet, not even upon the reduced scale of greatness according to which we measure the American field by itself.

On the other hand, if we were to attempt to estimate his product by some such definitional standard as that proposed on a previous page of this paper, we should probably be constrained on this ground also to

deny to Sill the epithet great. He has not depicted any very considerable phase of human life, and the hearts and ears of even his own time and clime have never had a chance to pass upon the power and melody of his song, since most of them have never heard it.

Nevertheless he has written some poems which, I am persuaded, are great, and several more that are pleasing and satisfying, and his career and his character were such as to catch the interest and win the admiration of all who hear of it.

Sill's output in verse is contained in three slim booklets of a hundred widespaced pages each. This deficiency in quantity of itself is sufficient to exclude him from consideration in the 'great' class. His verses are a microcosmic picture of the spiritual life of his time. The pale cast of thought is over all he wrote. I object to Hamlet's expression 'sicklied o'er.' It is fit and proper that the thoughts of men should influence their tastes and their aspirations and be mirrored in their verse. Of course, if you have a man who doesn't think, and can get him to express his joys in verse there will be no pale cast of thought about the verse, but it will be of the style of 'Captain Jinks' and 'A Hot Time in the Old Town.'

Given a man who loves and thinks and lives, and, in age of intellectual and spiritual criticism, tries to adjust his philosophy to the changing scheme of things and keep his faith in God and good, being dominated from the beginning by Puritan virtue and Puritan reserve and self-distrust,—that, I think, is one of the American types of our time. Let him express himself in verse, and you have Sill's product. If it is asked how this product will be different from that of Holmes, Lowell, Longfellow and Whittier, I would answer: From Holmes by the difference of temperament. Holmes never felt as uncertain of his position in the world, materially and spiritually; his doubts and fears never went so deep. Lowell developed in a period when the reformer and the prophet had more definite tasks before him, and his work has consequently a more decided tone and more practical aims. Longfellow was more thoroughly a litterateur; less touched by the conflicts of his time. Whittier, like Holmes, never doubted as deeply, but sailed all his course true to the pole of faith.

Sill has a more intimate feeling for outward Nature than any of his great predecessors with the possible exception of Emerson. But as a scholar and trained poet he knew his predecessors intimately and was more or less influenced by several of them. It seems to me that I can recognize distinctly in one point or another reflections of Tennyson, Lowell

and Emerson. Sill confessed his own great admiration for the sage of Concord. 'I always understood,' he said, 'why Emerson made his poems rough, and I sympathize more than ever.'

'Glad to know
Where the sweetest beech-nuts grow'

are words that have a tantalizing echo of Emerson, but I have not been able to locate the source.

'The angel song rings everywhere
And all the earth is Holy Land,'

recalls Whittier's 'And every land a Palestine.'

But there are not many such close resemblances in Sill — probably fewer than you could find in most poets of resemblances to the work of their predecessors. Miss Phelps compared Sill to Shelley, but I quite fail to see the resemblance. Sill's real lyrics are rare and have little of the singing quality of Shelley's.

To characterize Sill's work as to theme in a few words, it nearly all expresses the love of Nature and the attempt to find, and get close to, God in Nature. The longest of his poems, 'The Hermitage,' depicts the feelings of a mildly lovesick hermit in the mountains of California, a faint frame of romance enclosing descriptions and reflections. This romantic framework, of a man who runs away from a supposed rejection in the East and is finally followed by the maiden whom he had misunderstood, has touches that recall phases of Tennyson's 'Maud,' though the despair and cynicism are never so deep.

In the two volumes 'Poems' and 'The Hermitage and later Poems,' in a total of fifty-nine titles, there are twenty in which Nature is in the foreground, though seldom in simple, objective description. Measuring by quantity these poems would include much more than half of all. The remainder have for themes: death and immortality, thirteen; faith in God and the moral order of the Universe, fourteen; appeal for bravery in the battle of life, ten; love, nine; humility, three; life, five; aspiration for truth, three, with one that can scarcely be classified. These poems are by no means so didactic as this classification would lead one to expect, but with all the love of Nature, there is scarcely any poem that is not subjective.

Among several thoughts which I do not recall seeing expressed in poetry elsewhere, and yet very common thoughts, are the marvel over great consequences that seem to flow from apparently trifling circumstances, the attempt to realize the fact of planetary motions, and the

intimacy with the past derived from the thought that the same Moon and stars look down upon us as upon the ancient world.

Of the less frequently expressed phases of life, one that attracts my attention in Sill is the difference of our point of view when facing death from that with which we face life and the thought, which follows, of why this should be. In one poem it is from the point of view of the one who had faced death, in another from that of the rest of the world.

But after all, it is not in the exceptional or more original thoughts that Sill is at his best. It is in his fine and noble way of putting some of the oldest of thoughts. The lessons of faith in the moral order of the universe, of the great uses of small opportunities, and of genuine humility have nowhere been more nobly and more beautifully expressed than in 'Service,' 'Opportunity' and 'The Fool's Prayer.'

According to no conventional standards can Mr. Sill be classed among the great poets, and this, after all, is a matter of no consequence. If the author of a great poem might be called a great poet, I am sure that no one after reading 'The Fool's Prayer' would deny the rank to Sill. But the reflection comes up, when we recall the oft approved saying of Plato, that a poet cannot compose verses (that is, great verses) unless he be inspired, whether it would not be well to discourage professional poets and the rank of 'great poet' altogether. Some men write one great poem, some write a few; none write great poems only, because no one can be perpetually inspired and at his best. Ought not the Primitive Christian idea of the preacher, the Quaker and the Dunkard idea, to be applied to poets? It is best for them, and better for their product, that they be as much like other men in their experiences as possible, inasmuch as they are to be the mouthpieces of other men.

Let the poet, then, be a teacher, like Sill, a banker, like Stedman, a lawyer, like our Kansas Ironquill, and earn his living like other men. Let the mechanism of poetry, like the mechanism of music, be taught to all children, so that he who has a message may have the instrument with which to express it. Then we need no longer worry about the scarcity of great poets, for we shall not be lacking in great poems, though they be by obscure authors and called as more than once of old, 'People's Poems.'

“FLAMMANTIA MOENIA MUNDI”

BY WALTER S. HINCHMAN

YOU may remember how we stood alone,
We silent watched from a high eastern hill
The autumn setting sun, bright as the fires
That burn along the elm-arched ways of fall.
In front stood one small isle of dark green spines,
And by the river smoked an evening fire,
And on the hill beyond a cottage perched
And jutted dark against the western light.
Far, far beyond, in blue that seemed to fade
Yet ever changed to gold or ere it died,
The mountains silent stood against the deep,
Ranging eternal toward an endless west.
We speechless stood — forever thus to gaze;
One common thought was ours, one keen desire —
To sing, like angels in their melody,
Those mountain peaks against that glowing sky;
A single word for that ethereal blue!
Nay, a mere whispered thought — a look — a gesture —
Immortal aspiration to express
That master workman at his final task.
We thought perchance of young Orestes then,
How he and Pylades stood on the shore,
And gazing at the open, beating sea,
How one oft swung his spangle-hilted sword
Till future deeds took shape and clustered round them,
As star on star springs countless from the night.
And then perhaps a hint of all the pain,
Inexorable fate, impersonal,
Of those snake-locks and of that hideous laughter —
The graceless sisters heralding a Hell.
And all our aspiration infinite
Shrank as the dark drew on. With deeds unwrought,

With all that fair faith run to lees, we left.

Another time together stood we two
Upon the chapel's skyward-pointing tower
Under a winter's moon. The night was cold
And clear; across the glistering snow the hills
Rose white and far, beyond the shadow-land,
Like ghosts against the night. Perhaps we had
Again brave thoughts, perhaps we dreamed once more,
Under that moon-cold sky, of things too far
To fashion, and we prayed, in that pure air,
Faintly to shadow forth the deathless soul
Which nature showed us two at that midnight;
As who should say, 'Come then, 'tis fashioned thus;
Behold you but this single masterpiece.
What! would your aspiration breathe and be,
And then brook bonds of earthly fearfulness;
Wish bravely and then meet defeat, and thus
Failing at every new desire, so end,—
Complacent in eternal apathy!'

The thought of that lost sunset, of that night
When, heart and head, we drank eternity,
Brings Marlowe's 'broken branch' to memory:
How, being human, we must e'er aspire;
How being human, we can ne'er attain.
One craftily contrives his handiwork;
Another plies with fingers marvellous:
A silver strand, a bit of beaten brass,
A golden goblet brimmed with burning wine,
A song sung softly on a summer's eve—
The shadow of a glory just to be—
But none hath builded final, quite complete,
Nor can build, nature's deathless masterpiece.

And yet— that sunset and that moonlight pure,
The inspiration and the dream, the trace
That in our memories survives, were more
Than fond bright baubles for a child's caprice.
Perchance the thought, the mere wish to express,
Is art in kind as much as finished form;
The shadow strikes, and be it ne'er so faintly—
If only in a flickering glimpse of sun—

In shape and manner its original.
 They say, 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came,'
 Well, then, put slug-horn to your lips and blow !
 Not feebly, courting limitations passed,
 But blow a brave blast, as you would come through.
 For in that shadow's shadow, in that moment's touch
 Which tentative shapes all we seek to know,
 There lurks a breath of something infinite,
 A faint first flash of immortality,
 Prophetic of divinity to be.

QUEEN YSABEAU'S HUNTING

By MARY ELEANOR ROBERTS

THE stag was at bay on an autumn day,
 And a strange thing did befall;
 And the little birds of the wood
 Saw it all, saw it all.

The river from the fields of green
 Flows through the royal town,
 And other freight than ladies gay
 The river carries down.

For drifting corpses, so they tell,
 At matin-time are seen;
 Short shrift and never a passing bell
 For the lovers of the queen.

And children waking in the night
 May hear a sudden cry;
 But the Seine runs deep, the Seine runs fast,
 And palace walls are high.

Our lord, the king, upon the floor, —
 He plays with puppets there, —
 Woe worth the land, whose king is mad;
 And whose queen is passing fair !

Let other women mind their steps
And tell their beads and sigh;
Not she, not she, the gay and proud,
Whom God hath set so high.

Let other women pray, not she,
Whom God hath made so fair;
For Lilith, the witch, that children dread,
Hath not such golden hair.

Her hunting-train swept o'er the bridge,
To seek the forest glade;
And never an honest heart, I trow,
In all that cavalcade.

The nobles at her bridle-rein
To-day they are but three,
The Count of Tours and the Sire d'Auvergne
And the Lord of Picardie.

They entered into the deep forest
By the forge as it did betide,
And who but the farrier's stalwart son,
Stood forth to see her ride.

Oh ! a neck of brawn and clustering curls
And a ruddy cheek had he ! —
'Give back, give back, my lords of France,
For he shall ride with me ! '

They have set him on the huntsman's horse.
Oh ! he doth need, I ween,
A steady hand and a gallant heart,
Who rideth with the queen.

Oh ! fast the pace, and mad the race,
For youth doth know no fear;
And he and she are the only ones
To see the mort o' the deer.

What word was that she whispered him,
As he bent to her embrace?
The lubberly yokel started back
And struck her in the face !

QUEEN YSABEAU'S HUNTING

Oh! a woman's hand is quick and white
 And strong as it is fair;
 She has stretched him dying at her feet
 With the bodkin from her hair.

' Par terre ! Par terre ! Hah ! Hallel !
 The horn sounds loud and clear,
 The hunt comes rushing down the glade,
 To wind the mort o' the deer.

' Now see, my lords, if 'twas well done,
 I stand and ask of you;
 And whoso gives assent shall kiss
 The blood upon my shoe. '

Oh ! down they lighted on the grass
 And quickly bent the knee ; —
 The Count of Tours and the Sire d'Auvergne
 And the Lord of Picardie.

Oh ! then her scorn flashed from its sheath,
 Like lightning through the trees, —
 ' Small wonder, Lord ! what women be,
 When men are such as these !

' Ye kiss my hands, ye lick my foot,
 Ye call my garments clean,
 But here was a man who dared to die
 For the honor of his queen.

' Ye shall not cast him to the crows,
 Like an unbaptised hound,
 Ye shall bear his body, with book and bell,
 To consecrated ground.

' And craven puppets are ye all,
 From east and west and south !
 God knows he was at least a man,
 Who struck me on the mouth ! '

Red were the leaves in the autumn wood,
 When the stag to his death did fall;
 And the little birds of the wood
 Saw it all, — saw it all.

GIORDANO BRUNO, MARTYR AND IDEALIST

BY MARTHA PIKE CONANT

LIT up in the agitation of speaking, by many a harsh or scornful beam, yet always sinking, in moments of repose, to an expression of highbred melancholy, the face was one that looked, after all, made for suffering,—already half pleading, half defiant, as of a creature you could hurt, but to the last, never shake a hair's breadth from its estimate of yourself.'

Such is Pater's* imaginary portrait of Giordano Bruno at Paris, lecturing, at Pentecost season, on the Holy Spirit of the Universe. Martyr, idealist, called by his chief biographer, Berti, the greatest Italian philosopher of his epoch, type of the dissemination of the Italian Renaissance over Europe, forerunner of modern thought, Bruno is a figure of increasing interest today. He was burned as a heretic by the Inquisition in the year 1600 in the Campo dei Fiori, Rome.

On the ninth of June, 1889, visitors in Rome might have seen in that market-place an enthusiastic crowd surging around the base of a noble statue of this same Bruno, and shouting as it was unveiled: '*Viva Bruno!*' 'Honor to the martyr of free thought!'† They might have heard, too, the story told about the city that Pope Leo XIII spent the day in prayer and bitter grief at the thought of such honor paid to such a man. However that may be, it is true that the Pope sent to every church in Christendom a message to be read from the pulpit denouncing Bruno as a pantheist, who lied with a base mind and a wicked heart and who was an inconsistent and dangerous thinker to follow. The Roman Catholic Church would not burn Bruno today, but she would condemn him just as surely as she did in 1600.

Nevertheless, for the sake of these so-called lies, Bruno died 'a martyr and willingly.'§

What kind of a man was this steadfast idealist? How may one account for the increasing interest taken in him by the nineteenth century? And

*Walter Pater, *Gaston de Latour, an Unfinished Romance*, Macmillan & Co. 1896.

†R. Landseck, *Bruno der Martyrer*, 1890, gives satisfactory pictures of Bruno and of the bas-reliefs on this monument.

§'Diceva che moriva martire et volontieri' *Avvisi di Roma* 1600, 19 February. I Frith, *Life of Giordano Bruno the Nolan*, revised by Prof. Moriz Carriere, London, Trübner & Co. 1887, page 306, note.

how did it happen that Italy, the Italy of the freethinking Renaissance, allowed her greatest philosopher to suffer such a death? What was the true story of his life? The material is abundant. Best of all, thanks to the Venetian archives of his trial, Bruno has himself told us the story; and, as we read, we seem to be present in the council chamber of the Grand Inquisition at Venice.

'My name is Giordano, of the family of Bruni, of the city of Nola, twelve miles from Naples,' a simple, straight-forward account, elaborated by historians like Berti and Mrs. Frith, until his life burns itself in on our memory like a tragedy. It is the tragic story of the martyr for truth's sake, of the 'Truth forever on the scaffold,' and it was, perhaps, in Goethe's mind when he wrote :

'The few (who knew something of the truth) unwisely frank, with
hearts that spurned concealing
And to the mob laid bare each thought and feeling
Have evermore been crucified and burned.'*

If a tragic poet were writing a drama on Bruno's life, he might divide it readily into three acts : I, Youth at Nola and Naples; II, Wanderings in exile over Europe; III, Betrayal, Imprisonment and Death. Born in 1548 at Nola, a little town near Naples where Greek traditions had lingered all through the Middle Ages, Bruno received a thorough humanistic education, and, at the age of fourteen, entered the Dominican Convent at Naples,—the same convent hallowed by the memory of St. Thomas Aquinas. Here he spent thirteen years of quiet and profound study,—on Greek philosophy, the Bible, the Church fathers, and the scholastics, especially Aquinas, of whose works he said at the Venetian trial: 'I have always loved and kept them by me and I have them with me now.' But this wide reading resulted, for Bruno's eager temperament, in frank independence of thought, and, since he was too honest to conceal his opinions, he was threatened with a trial for heresy and fled from Naples, never to return to the home he called 'the golden fields of Nola.'

The wanderings of the exile over Europe follow a bewildering itinerary : Northern Italy, Calvinistic Geneva, Paris, London, dozens of German universities, his fortunes now up, now down, now barely earning his bread by teaching grammar, mathematics and the art of memory, then suddenly appearing as a successful lecturer, rousing the enthusiasm of his audiences by his remarkable eloquence, his wonderful personality and his fervid rhapsodies on strange, new ideas like that of the Infinite

*Faust, Taylor's Translation.

Universe and innumerable worlds and of the indwelling Spirit of God; and pouring out grateful eulogies on his patrons, Henry III. of France, Queen Elizabeth of England, and various German dukes. A fiery speaker he must have been, impetuous, sarcastic, bitterly lashing what he called 'the rusty learning of the schools,' or the narrow interpretation of Christian doctrine and philosophy; learned, but curiously pedantic and allegorical, as his works on the mediæval Art of Memory by Raymond Lully testify, vain and obstinate in holding to his own opinions and yet all the time studying and thinking along original and daring lines, making fast friends and faster enemies, an untiring, eager, freedom-loving soul,

‘ Still climbing after knowledge infinite
And always moving as the restless spheres.’

To London Bruno came, in 1583, under the happiest auspices, as guest of the cultured French ambassador, welcomed at court by the Queen herself and by men of letters. Here he wrote his best works. In ‘*La Cena de le Generi*,’ or ‘Supper of Ashes, Evening Conversations on Ash Wednesday,’ there is an extremely interesting description of a symposium at the house of Sir Fulke Greville, where Bruno met Dyer, Harvey, Temple and Sidney (not Spenser, for he was then in Ireland), and discussed ‘moral, metaphysical, mathematical and natural speculations.’ Of Sidney Bruno spoke most appreciatively as ‘a very illustrious and excellent knight,’ whose ‘*tersissimo ingegno*’ and admirable manners were unmatched not only outside of but even within Italy. To Sidney he dedicated several works. While in England, Bruno took part in certain Oxford disputations on astronomy and the immortality of the soul, and, apparently, his belligerent manner stirred up the sleepy doctors to a thoroughly British state of disapproval. He says they were arrayed in velvet, with twelve rings on two fingers and were as void of courtesy as cowherds. He himself was, he says, patient and humane, a statement somewhat inconsistent with his mention of his late antagonist as ‘that pig,’ or of Oxford herself as ‘the widow of sound learning.’ In the German cities his fortunes varied, and his belief in the virtue of anger as a sharpener of the wit may have been one reason for his brief stay in certain towns. His happiest year was at Wittenberg, and his valedictory is an eloquent tribute to the learning and courtesy of the University.

Act III of the tragedy of Bruno’s life begins by his accepting the invitation of a Venetian nobleman Mocenigo to come to Venice. Mocenigo wished to be taught all Bruno knew, especially the Art of Memory, and

apparently thought Bruno had some magical short-cut to knowledge. Mocenigo was a stupid scholar, and probably Bruno's blunt frankness kindled his hate. He complained that Bruno was teaching others, was concealing secrets from him, and was not giving him his money's worth. Bruno protested that he was teaching him all he had promised. The protest was in vain. Mocenigo's smouldering hate finally flamed up, and, while Bruno was a guest in his house, he seized him and handed him over to the Inquisition with a malicious accusation of heresy. It was largely false, like the statement that Bruno had called Christ a 'wicked good-for-nothing,' and that Bruno knew magic. It was partly true, as for instance, that Bruno did not believe in the Trinity and desired to teach a 'New Philosophy.'

Bruno made the curious and illogical distinction, not uncommon then and not unknown today, between his belief as a Christian and his belief as a philosopher. The Church, from her point of view, was consistent in declaring him a heretic. He did not believe in the narrow, bigoted interpretations of religious truth sanctioned by the Theologians of that time, but the spirit of his philosophy had much in common with pure Christianity. The interesting essay on Bruno by Mr. William Roscoe Thayer* gives an account of the trial, and discusses Bruno's puzzling recantation. How Bruno could deny any of his philosophical ideas even if they were at variance with Church dogma is difficult to understand, but, as Mr. Thayer suggests, the denial adds another element of human interest to a perplexing but fascinating personality. One wonders when, and how, in the seven long years of imprisonment that followed Bruno's courage came back to him. We do not know, but we cannot help wondering if, to so sensitive a nature, the mental and spiritual suffering were not harder to bear than any physical torture he may have endured.

The next we hear of him is toward the close of the seven years, when, in the dungeons of the Inquisition the answer of Bruno is placed on record. With a spirit not broken by silence or torture nor by hope deferred, and being more weary of delay than of death, he said; 'I ought not to recant and I will not recant. I have nothing to recant, nor any reason to recant, nor do I know what I should recant.'† Like the martyr Cranmer, he had learned to 'play the man,' all the more steadfastly because of his previous wavering.

In February, 1600, a jubilee year, when Rome was thronged with pilgrims, the Church condemned Bruno to death, handing him over to

*In *Throne-makers* (Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1899), reprinted from the *Atlantic Monthly*.
†I. Frith, *op. cit.* page 298.

the temporal power to be punished 'most mercifully and without the shedding of blood,' the terrible phrase which meant death by fire. As Bruno knelt to receive this sentence he said with a menacing aspect: 'It may be you fear more to deliver judgment upon me than I fear judgment.' A last effort was made to induce him to repent, but in vain, for he was living the words he had written years before: 'The wise man fears not death; yea, there may be times when he seeks death, or at least goes peacefully forth to meet it.'

Of Bruno's numerous works, two may be chosen as peculiarly interesting: '*La Cena de le Ceneri*' or 'Supper of Ashes,' mentioned above, and '*Gli Eroici Furori*' or 'Heroic Enthusiasts.' The former is dedicated to the French ambassador and is in the form of dialogues, at times really dramatic. 'Then said Sir Fulke Greville: "I beg thee, Sir Nolan, inform me of the reasons why you think the earth moves."'* And before Bruno gives any reasons, he says frankly that he cannot unless he is sure the listeners are both earnest and capable. The dialogue goes on to give an exceedingly picturesque account of how Bruno came by boat on the Thames to Greville's house. Then follows a passage genuinely eloquent in fervor and simplicity. '*Non e, non e impossibile, ben che sii difficile, questa impresa. La difficolta e quella, cb'e ordinata a far star a dietro li poltroni. Le cose ordinarie e facili son per il volgo et ordinaria gente; gli uomini rari, eroici e divini passano per questo cammino de la difficolta, a fine che sii costretta la necessita a concederli la palma de la immortalita; Giungesi a questa, che; quantunque non sia possibile arrivare al termine di guardagnar il palio, correte pure, e fate il vostro sforzo in una cosa di si fatta importanza, e resistete sin a l'ultimo spirto! Non sol chi vince vien lodato, ma anco chi non muore da codardo e poltrone.*'† 'It is not, it is not impossible, this undertaking, though indeed it is difficult. The difficulty is such, as is ordained to make poltroons hang back. Ordinary things and easy are for common and ordinary folk; men rare, heroic and divine pass along by means of this road of difficulty, until at last Necessity herself is constrained to grant them the palm of immortality. And moreover, although it may not be possible to reach the end and gain the prize, yet run, and make your effort in so important a race, and strive ever to your latest breath! It is not only he who conquers who is to be praised, but also he who does not die as a coward and poltroon.'

Then Bruno praises Queen Elizabeth and Sidney, has a fling at English table manners, and goes into a prolonged discussion of the new Coper-

* *Dialogo secondo*, p. 137. *Opere di Giordano Bruno*, pubblicate da Adolfo Wagner, 1830.
† *Opere*, op. cit. p. 142.

nican theory that the earth moves on its axis and around the sun. He asserts that the universe is infinite, without centre or circumference and is animated by a soul, that philosophy and true religion are in accord, and that this is what is meant by the statement that 'the morning stars sang together.' We must listen to our reason rather than to our senses, e. g., as to the sun's rising, for our reason is divine and immortal; 'to say otherwise is impious.'

'*Gli Eroici Furori*,' or 'Heroic Enthusiasts' was dedicated '*Al molto illustre et eccellente Cavalliero Signor Philippo Sidneo.*' (London) 1585. It is in the form of dialogues interspersed with sonnets, some by Bruno, some by Tansillo. The whole book is a rhapsody on heroic enthusiasms, praising the poet or philosopher who loves the highest wisdom, 'the light.' It is over-burdened with fantastic figures of speech and blind allegory, but contains, here and there, passages of genuine beauty. This sonnet is Tansillo's, but is equally typical of Bruno :

'Winged by desire and thee, O dear delight !
As still the vast and succouring air I tread,
So, mounting still, on swifter pinions sped,
I scorn the world and Heaven receives my flight.
And if the end of Ikaros be nigh,
I will submit, for I shall know no pain :
And falling dead to earth, shall rise again;
What lowly life with such high death can vie?
Then speaks my heart from out the upper air,
"Whither dost lead me? sorrow and despair
Attend the rash;" and thus I make reply,
Fear thou no fall, nor lofty ruin sent;
Safely divide the clouds and die content,
When such proud death is dealt thee from on high.' !*

Love is praised in true Petrarchan style, so fervidly that Pater imagines Bruno to have been no stranger to human passion. Bruno calls his mistress Wisdom and declares that the true lover of Wisdom must be heroic, courageous, enthusiastic, must possess, in Bruno's own fine phrase, 'the majesty of an unconquered soul and tolerant spirit.' † 'Most certainly there is a god in every man, but what god it is in each one is not so easy to know.' 'God, the divine beauty and splendor

* Translation by I. Frith, p. 131, *op. cit.*

† The quotations are from 'The Heroic Enthusiasts,' ('*Gli Eroici Furori*,') 'An Ethical Poem by Giordano Bruno.' Part the first, translated by L. Williams, London, G. Redway, 1887.

shines and is in all things, and the soul obtains a vision of God by the inner light.' Bruno disdains 'the ignoble, vulgar, stupid crowd,' and speaks of the 'infinite unrest of the craving intellect for the fountain of light.' The phrase, 'My sweet enemy,' which we find in Sidney, may come from Bruno. The Fourth and Fifth Dialogues contain the allegory of the nine blind men, and in the Fourth there are phrases that might have come from Maeterlinck's drama, 'The Blind.'

' Into a low and cavernous place,
While I, without a guide, am stepping on.'

' So towards the dark and cavernous abyss,
I, a blind, arid man direct my steps.
Ah, pity me and do not hesitate
To help my speedy going. I who
. Towards profound oblivion lead the way.'

' Be ye benign unto this vacant face
O people full of grievous hindrances
The while this harassed weary trunk
Goes knocking at the doors
To meet a death less painful, more profound.'

But Bruno's buoyant optimism does not stop there; and in the Fifth Dialogue sight is restored by the power of the lovely, pure and wise ladies of England, and, after a song of joy by the blind who have received sight, the book closes with a final compliment to the English ladies and the Queen.

To begin to characterize Bruno's writings as a whole is to enter a labyrinth. Fortunately there is an excellent clue to be found in the idealism pervading all his utterances. His eager speculation sought truth in every department of thought. When asked at the Venetian trial if he were a magician and knew astrology, he denied the accusation, but said frankly that he had always intended to investigate astrology, as soon as he had leisure, to see if there were any truth in it. One does not wonder at his lack of leisure, when one considers all that he had read.

A genuine child of the Renaissance, he knew Plato and Plotinus in Ficino's versions, he was familiar with the Pythagorean theory of numbers, and Parmenides' belief in one infinite being, and he regarded Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas with the eyes of a Platonic idealist. From the Classics Bruno gained much, from Virgil he took the phrase '*mens agitat molem*,' and from classical mythology countless stories and phrases.

From Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, who died in 1464, a forerunner of Copernicus and of Bruno in the doctrine of the absolute Unity-God, Bruno drew much of his inspiration. He honored Dante, and his wide reading and prodigious memory included as well the curious mediæval works of Lully. Last and greatest gift of the Renaissance to Bruno was the scientific truth newly discovered by Copernicus.

To this rich and varied inheritance Bruno came in true Renaissance spirit, with eager curiosity and buoyant enthusiasm, with a passion for investigation and discovery, an utter disdain of authority, an assertion of his own individuality. Bruno insisted often violently and harshly on the right of each man to absolute freedom of thought, in every sphere of knowledge.

The creative period of the Renaissance had passed, and as Symonds* suggests, the Italian genius naturally turned aside into the new and fascinating realms of scientific research. Bruno was the first great thinker to apply this new critical spirit to Copernicus' wonderful discovery. How startling this discovery must have been we can realize only by trying to put ourselves back into the days before Copernicus when men believed, according to the Ptolmaic or Aristotelian theory, that our earth is the fixed center of a finite universe consisting of crystal spheres enveloping the earth one beyond another, and that in these revolving spheres the stars and sun are fixed like gems. Copernicus said; 'The earth is not the center but revolves about the sun,' and the theologians drew back in horror at such heresy. If this were true, what would become of their map of earth, hell and paradise; and of man as the chief object of God's care, and of the infallibility of the Bible? This new theory would disturb belief in the miracle of Joshua's making the sun stand still and must be heresy. Copernicus had retained the theory of the crystalline spheres, but, in Symonds' words: 'Bruno broke those walls.' His bold and poetic imagination conceived a universe without center and without circumference, containing numberless, inhabited worlds in limitless space, infinite groups of stars about infinite suns.

Moreover, to Bruno this universe was an 'animal,' i. e., it had an *Anima*, the indwelling God, everywhere present. In the words of Weber: † 'Bruno said, "God is in every blade of grass, grain of sand or atom that floats in the sunbeam, (as well as in the soul of man), and in the boundless All."

* J. A. Symonds: 'The Italian Renaissance.' The Catholic Reaction I.

† Weber: 'History of European Philosophy.' Translated from French, N. Y., 1897.

And in Pater's beautiful rhapsody,* 'And God the Spirit, the soul of the world, being therefore really identical with the soul of Bruno also, as the universe shapes itself to Bruno's reason, to his imagination, ever more and more articulately, he too becomes a sharer of the divine joy in that process of the formation of true ideas, which is really parallel to the process of creation, to the evolution of things. In a certain mystic sense, which some in every age of the world have understood, he, too, is a creator; himself actually a participator in the creative function. And by such a philosophy, Bruno assures us, it was his experience that the soul is greatly expanded: '*Con questa filosofia, l'anima mi s'aggrandisce; mi se magnifica l'intelletto!*'

Moreover as Pater goes on to suggest, Bruno leaving behind him 'mere scholastic subtlety,' recognized all Nature as divine, and realized also 'the largeness† of the field of concrete knowledge, the infinite extent of all there was actually to know . . . the earth's wonderful animation as divined by one who anticipates by a whole generation the Baconian philosophy of experience; in that, those bold, flighty, pantheistic speculations become tangible matter of fact. Here was the needful book for man to read, the full revelation . . . the veritable history of God . . . Nature . . . evolution of man . . . still all to learn. . . the delightful tangle of *things*!—it would be the delightful task of man's *thoughts* to disentangle that.

Already Bruno had measured the space which Bacon would fill, with room perhaps for Darwin also. . . To Dutch Spinoza, in the next century, faint, consumptive. . . the theorem that God was in all things whatever . . . suggested a somewhat chilly withdrawal from the contact of all alike. But in Bruno, eager and impassioned, an Italian of the Italians, it awoke a constant, inextinguishable appetite for every form of experience,—a fear, as of the one sin possible, of limiting, for one's self or another, the great stream flowing for thirsty souls, that wide pasture set ready for the hungry heart.' There was danger in this theory, for if soul is in everything alike, what becomes of the distinction between good and evil? What practical inference would Catherine de Medici draw if she listened to Bruno, in Paris, just after St. Bartholomew?

In the central thought of Bruno's philosophy, the idea of the immanent cause, the historians say that he anticipated and possibly influenced 'the reasoned pantheism' of Spinoza; and a remarkable number of modern

* Pater: 'Gaston de Latour,' p. 182.

† Ibid, p. 190.

conceptions may be found more or less plainly stated by this sixteenth century philosopher, *e. g.*, the law of conservation of energy, the idea of 'evil as a relative condition of imperfect development,' the theory of monads and the theory of evolution. So that there was justification for putting on the base of the statue to Bruno in Rome: 'To Bruno from the century foretold by him, here where his pyre burned.'

But how could the freethinking Italy of the Renaissance allow the exile and the martyrdom of this idealist? A glance at the dates of his life and at the condition of Italy answers the question. The Renaissance in Italy was dead. The despotism of Spain and the despotism of the Church, aided by the Inquisition and the Jesuits, were effecting the Catholic Reaction and crushing not only political but even intellectual freedom. Bruno in that age must live an exile and die a martyr; but his whole life was a passionate preaching of the Gospel of the Spirit, and his death a protest against the right of any power on earth to assume to dictate to the free human soul.

Yet, as an exile, Bruno is strikingly typical of the dissemination of the spirit of the Italian Renaissance. We may not be able to lay our finger on any direct influence of Bruno's words. Beyersdorf * demolishes the theory that Bruno definitely influenced Shakespeare or any other Elizabethan. We may not be willing to agree with the hopeful critic who enthusiastically suggests that since Bruno lectured at Wittenberg in 1586, 'the year Hamlet was a student there,' the latter heard him lecture! But the meeting at Fulke Greville's house must have stimulated that thoughtful group of men. Spenser was not there, and yet in 'The Faerie Queene,' Bk. II., Canto 3, he writes (1590):

And later times things more unknown shall show
Why then should witless man so much misween
That nothing is but that which he hath seen?
What if within the moon's fair shining sphere
What if in every other star unseen
Of other worlds he happily should hear,
He wonder would much more; yet such to some appear.'

And as Bruno passed on his restless mission over Europe, who knows the limit of the influence of 'that subtle, spiritual fire,' as Pater calls him? For as we read Bruno we seem to hear echoes of our modern idealists, of Goethe, who partially recognized Bruno's character, in the words, 'Nature

* R. Beyersdorf: 'G. Bruno and Shakespeare,' 1889.

the living garment of God; and of Carlyle's ' Everlasting No ' and ' Everlasting Yea; ' an echo of Wordsworth's

' I have felt . . .
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things; '

An echo of Emerson's optimistic faith in self reliance and in the Over-Soul; of Pater himself and of Shelley's passion for freedom and faith in ' the one spirit's plastic stress, ' in

That light whose smile kindles the universe,
That beauty in which all things work and move.'

Though we may not be justified in saying that in these modern idealists we hear echoes of Bruno, still it is by virtue of his harmony with the truth, it is as an idealist, that Bruno, after three hundred years, lives today. His perplexing individuality, his tragic fate, his interest as a personification of the spirit of protest against intellectual tyranny and as a type of the dissemination of the Italian Renaissance over Europe, his work as forerunner of modern science and philosophy; all this fascinating but puzzling complexity is illuminated by Bruno's earnestness, his genuine consecration and his own heroic enthusiasm for the unseen truth which is eternal.

YEATS IN THE MAKING

By CHARLES JOHNSTON

WILLIE YEATS first comes into the story as a new boy at Harcourt Street school. I remember him as a lanky youth, with shaggy black hair, markedly good-looking and very talkative. He fitted in at once; Irish schoolboys are far gentler and more hospitable to the newcomer than boys in England. Willie Yeats and I gravitated together. We had both recently come from English schools. We were about of an age. We both had a passion for experimental science. So we sat together, worked together, gossiped together, paraded the playground together, and, on half-holidays, went on long rambles in the country. The school had once been Dean Swift's mansion; the torch-extinguishers still stand at either side of the doorway, and the vast garden has been turned into a playground, strewn with gravel and overshadowed by huge, ragged elms.

Willie Yeats was strong in mathematics, especially Euclid, and he had a gift for chemistry, but he was no good at all at languages, whether ancient or modern. He just managed to stumble through his Homer, partly with his father's scholarly help, partly by aid of a bad translation. Here, in the tale of Odysseus and the Cyclops, he found the wonderful word 'yeanling' for a young lamb, and presently brought it out triumphantly in class, rendering a famous passage: 'And he placed a yeanling under each!' This won him the title of Yeatling, which stuck for awhile, but for most of the time he was simply Willie Yeats. A day school has not the same opportunities for nicknames as a boarding school. At Derby, for instance, where I passed the three preceding years, a string of boys, and some of the manliest in the number, bore girls' names habitually, and one heard calls for Katie and Amy in the football field and the boathouse, with gruff, unconscious response.

Willie Yeats was even then one of the best and most willing talkers I have ever known. He began by relating all kinds of wonderful things he had accomplished at school in London, with cells and batteries. There was a burglar alarm, distributing shocks from his doorknob. There was the story of a fight. A bigger boy, one of two handsome athletic brothers, had coached him for weeks, sending him in with a final 'You'll do, I' to lick his bully. There were fascinating yarns, too, of the days when he

was commodore of a model yacht-club, sailing his boat on the Round Pond in Kensington Garden, where the white sails and the ample chestnut branches were reflected together in the rippled mirror of the water. He was a keen critic of the lines of a boat, and expounded the theory of the fin keel.

Yeats made his first mark at school as an essayist and revolutionary. He had just discovered Darwinism, and was brimful of the *Descent of Man*. We had to write on our Favorite study, and Willie Yeats, with malice prepense, chose Evolutionary Botany. That was the first of his writings to win fame, though I doubt if he remembers it today. For weeks after it was handed in, the class-room was full of suppressed lightning. The master, 'Tommy' Foster, was advanced in some ways, glorying greatly in the mathematics of the infinities; but to countenance Yeats' heresy was quite another matter. Nor had he any idea of letting the enormity be debated in class. He decided to suppress Yeats, and Yeats decided not to be suppressed; so the flashes crackled out every now and then among the elements of Euclid.

To one of the boys, whose name may have been Rowbotham, Yeats' evolutionary ideas caused real pain and grief. Rowbotham was a devoted literalist, and between the two, the conflict of science and religion raged for a whole term. Yeats, when he should have been studying the Olymthiacs, pored instead over Grant Allen and Edward Clodd, gathering arrows for the fray, while poor Rowbotham split his head and grieved his heart with the interpretation of the Pentateuch. Yeats, who is now so great a mystic, was frankly a materialist in those days, and it was just a little bit painful to listen to his arguments with his antagonist, for whom all spiritual life depended on the six days of Genesis.

The conflict raged daily beneath the surface, in the class rooms and about the playground, and at last the combatants carried it down to the museum. There Yeats sought missing links, while Rowbotham found irrefragable evidences of special creation. Yeats comes up before the inner eye, as he was in those days: lean, graceful, impetuous, his arms swinging in long curved gestures, his eyes flashing, as he brushed the long black lock from his white forehead. He pointed out adaptations, bridges between kingdoms, the plesiosaurus, the archeopteryx, the duck-billed platypus. His slower opponent, handicapped by religious sensibility, and therefore easily wounded, doggedly fought all arguments, found objections to all theories, declared that probable was not proven, and resisted stubbornly, as one who felt his soul at stake. It was rather a painful battle that thus raged along the cases of stuffed birds and beasts,

and among the remains of chalky monsters. Finally Yeats was pressed to give positive facts instead of mere plausible fancies. He quoted paleolithic man, older far than the four thousand and four years before the nativity to which Rowbotham passionately clung; and Rowbotham desperately declared that, though these things might indeed be found, yet 'only in isolated instances,' which proved nothing. So the matter closed.

Think it not strange that schoolboys should engage in so deep spiritual matters. It is very likely that never in later life do we feel so keenly the burden and importunity of immaterial issues; never again are principles so all important. There were other pathetic spiritual dramas. One boy confessed that he spent whole nights in prayer, seeking proof of spiritual realities, and watching for a sign till the dawn broke in grey and rose. Yet he was by daylight the most inveterate practical joker, and the wittiest; once he gathered a great crowd in St. Stephen's Green to see the meridian, which revealed itself as a telegraph wire across a white sky. But Willie Yeats was not interested in spiritual things; another side of his nature was being developed. He and I went for long walks on Saturday afternoons, along the Dodder's amiable, idyllic banks, or over the green foot-hills that lead to the matted heather of the Dublin mountains, or down by the shore where fought Brian the Brave, of whom in those days we had never even heard. Yeats was always the chief speaker, telling, with endless flow of words, the last thoughts he had gleaned from *The Evolutionist at Large*, and plucking a big ox-eye daisy or a bunch of sycamore seeds, with their pink wings, or a jointed mare's-tail to illustrate his view.

'Look at this daisy!' he would say, his big, dark eyes aglow with enthusiasm, 'you can prove the whole of Evolution from it! It finds it more advantageous to gather all its flowers in a single colony at the top of the stalk, and then the flowerets divide into two families, the white flags round the edge, and the yellow trumpets over the round cushion in the center!'

'Oh, but how can you talk of a daisy deciding to form a colony?'

'That's only a figure of course! The flowers that were more conspicuously grouped, attracted more bees, got fertilized soonest, and so propagated their kind. Among these, some were better fitted than others; and so it goes on, till the new form is reached!'

'Yes, there is the whole of the *Origin of Species*, in a single daisy; and in these studies, among fields and woods and by the seashore, the future poet learned to see the natural world with keen and individual

vision. To these days of wandering and study he owes the wonderful nature touches that fill his poems; such lines as these :

‘ Autumn is over the long leaves that love us,
And over the mice in the barley sheaves;
Yellow the leaves of the rowan above us,
And yellow the wet wild-strawberry leaves.’

I think I could point out the very rowan trees, with their fringed, delicate leaves, by a roadside near the Dublin mountains, that gave him this image. What fresh beauty is given, too, by the individual vision of natural life in lines like these :

‘ And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight’s all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet’s wings.’

Nor are these vivid nature-images used for beauty only. From the market of souls, in the ‘Countess Cathleen,’ one may take lines like these :

‘ Now people throng to sell,
Noisy as seagulls tearing a dead fish.’

The simile may have come from the strand of Sandymount, or the green, wet boulders of Clontarf, or from Howth, perhaps, a year or so later. The poet transfigures what the evolutionist saw.

II.

Then came the period when science began to be humanized and touched with culture. The strongest influence came from the studio of Yeats’ father, who with rare wisdom and sympathy aided his son’s spiritual growth. Mr. Yeats was, and happily I can still say, is, a rare idealist, a pure worshipper of beauty; full of enthusiasm, full of generous unworldliness, gifted with great artistic insight and power. Somewhat late in life, he determined to devote himself to painting. He has done many admirably sympathetic portraits, and much fine work in black and white; yet he has always felt what he would have gained by an earlier start, and was, therefore, tenderly solicitous of his son’s beginnings. A little tale he told me himself will serve to paint him. He had been asked

to paint the portrait of some dignitary, who sat, rather solemn and impressive, in his arm-chair. Finally Mr. Yeats came to a stop, his palette and brushes in his hand, and his fine, gentle eyes lit with humorous pathos.

'This won't do at all!' he protested. 'You must praise me! If you don't praise me, I cannot paint you!'

Many of the finer qualities of Willie Yeats' mind were formed in the studio on St. Stephen's Green, in long talks on art and life, on man and God, with his sensitive, enthusiastic father. One remembers the long room, with its skylight, the walls of pale green, frames and canvasses massed along them; a sofa and a big armchair or two; the stout iron stove with its tube; and, filling the whole with his spirit, the artist stepping forward along a strip of carpet to touch his work with tentative brush, then stepping back again, always in movement, always meditating high themes, and now and then breaking into talk on the second part of 'Faust,' or the Hesperian apples, or the relation of villainy to genius.

'The same surcharge of energy makes both,' I remember him saying; 'you must have high positive force to be a successful pirate; a change in environment would have made the same man a great creative artist!'

'Transmutation of energy!' broke in Willie, brushing the shaggy black hair from his eyes, and still hovering in thought between science and art.

'Precisely! That is it exactly!' cried Mr. Yeats, enthusiastic over his son's phrase; 'And now let us have tea!'

The black kettle was brought forth from the cupboard, and set on the stove; a big loaf was duly divided into hunches, liberally buttered; the kettle boiled, the tea was made, and tempered with condensed milk, and the talk on art and life went on.

In those days, Yeats had thoughts of following in his father's footsteps, and becoming an artist in color and form, and much of the view he then held breaks forth in his criticism, for instance, of the pictures of William Blake. He drew well, with sensitive impressionism, and studied hard for some months at the Art Schools in Merrion Square. Indeed, he left school about this time, and gave himself up wholly to drawing, and I saw him more frequently at home, and in the studio. The happiest atmosphere filled his home life, gay, artistic, disinterested, full of generous impracticability. The Yeatses lived in Northumberland Terrace in those days, on the road between Harold's Cross and Terenure, and the artistic spirit radiated out from everything in the house, sketches, pictures, books, and the perpetual themes of conversation. Mr. Yeats loved to read aloud to his children, and I remember many a humorous

scene when Mrs. Yeats, who used to take a little nap during the reading, was called on suddenly to tell the subject. She invariably repeated the last sentence, with a quaint little smile, though an instant earlier she had been fast asleep. Willie Yeats was full of Swinburne in those days, and recited to me many of the Poems and Ballads; chanted them, rather; and even now, phrases came back, ringing with his voice, and lit with his dark eyes: 'A girdle of arms for the queen's daughter; 'and then, in the closing line: 'The pains of hell for the queen's daughter.'

While still determinedly drawing from the white plaster models in Merrion Square, Willie Yeats began to write verse also. He used to read or repeat to me his earliest poems, as we sat in his little room, or walked on our interminable rambles, towards the mountains or the sea. The first verses came forth out of a vast murmurous gloom of dreams, and were full of vague, enormous shapes of some supernatural forest. In the later days of precise enameling, of dainty word-music, I have many a time regretted the largeness and epic sweep of the earliest work, much of which was never published. I remember a few lines of that early date:

'Dwelt the princess great Wiagin
Fairest child of Sweden old,
In her castle by the Baltic,
In her towers calm and cold' . . .

There were also 'a timid folk who dwelt among the pines' . . . and a majestic Sintram, 'a great twin brother,' who revealed himself a shining form, in the gold and crimson of sunset, and who was bound by mysterious destiny with his earthly counterpart.

In the work of the earliest days, there was nothing to reveal or even suggest the poet of mystical Ireland; no consciousness, even, of any special poetical material to be drawn from mystic Eire. One can realize this by turning over the leaves of the earlier book of verse, or, better still, by noting the order of first publication in the rare folios of the *Dublin University Review*. There were Princesses of Sweden, there were Greek islands with a mystical people of statues; there were Moorish magicians, Spanish Inquisitors, and Indian Sages; nothing peculiarly Celtic or Irish; yet everywhere a largeness, a vague gloom, an imaginative and dreamy depth, a sense of cavernous things, of overhanging deeps, from which were presently to issue the more purely Celtic forms of vision and of dream.

The determining force was doubtless found in the friendship of John O'Leary, the old man eloquent, who had returned from years of exile to

his native land. For the artistic visionaries and dreamers, who were always meditating large, vague actions, there was something fascinating and irresistible in the man of action, who had not only dreamed but dared; who had staked his life on an ideal, and sacrificed his youth and manhood for a forlorn hope. Yet man of actions as he was, John O'Leary was the greatest dreamer of them all. He was full of large philosophic thought, a lover of the Neoplatonists, a devotee of Ideas. It was either from him or through his influence that Willie Yeats now got the poems of Sir Samuel Ferguson, which finally crystalized his shadowy purposes and dreams, and made him from henceforth the chosen singer of Gaelic mysticism. He pored over the dusty volumes of the Royal Irish Academy, and the versions of the Gaelic Text Society, saturating himself with legends and traditions, and delightedly perceiving that all that he had noted of natural beauty in his own land was available for his new themes.

From these mingled influences came 'The Wanderings of Oisin,' which was printed, if I mistake not, in the *Dublin University Review*, in the autumn of 1884 or the spring of 1885. For me, it is subject of regret that he has retouched the name and many a passage in the body of the work; yet this epic story ever fills me with wonder and delight; and it is especially dear to me, as holding more of the swift movement and large multitudinous action which I miss in much of his later work, but which was so powerful a part of the first unpublished writings. Here is a passage from the first Book :

' Caolte, and Conan, and Finn were there,
 When we followed a deer with our baying hounds,
 With Bran, Sgeolan, and Lomair,
 And passing the Firbolgs' burial mounds,
 Came to the cairn-heaped grassy hill
 Where passionate Maive is stony still;
 And found on the dove-gray edge of the sea
 A pearl-pale, high-born lady, who rode
 On a horse with bridle of findrinny;
 And like a sunset were her lips,
 A stormy sunset on doomed ships;
 A citron colour gloomed in her hair,
 But down to her feet white vesture flowed,
 And with the glimmering crimson glowed
 Of many a figured embroidery ' . . .

More characteristic, both in movement and rhythm, is the following from the third Book :

' Fled foam underneath us, and round us a wandering and milky smoke,
High as the saddle-girth, covering away from our glances the tide;
And those that fled, and that followed, from the foam-pale distance broke;
The immortal desire of immortals we saw in their faces, and sighed.'

III.

When some great genius, in the golden evening of his life, gathers for us his store of *Wahrheit und Dichtung*, truth and poetry, it is not the mere relation of fact which gives the record value. He must dissolve each fact in thought and feeling, set it floating in the warm light of imagination, transmute it, and impress on it his individual power. Each event is now seen as part of the record of his initiation into life, revealing to us what he himself has penetrated, of the great mystery, and having value as helping us to share his mastery and perceive his vision. The test of a master is, where he can put us with regard to life, what hold he can give us over love and death, over misery and hatred.

It is not otherwise with the substance of a poet's message, though the poet has another and added value : his gift of beauty, whereby he unveils, in greater or less degree, that essence of divinity which is in all things beautiful. Through this gift, the poet is ever a revealer of divine and eternal things, no matter what his themes or views, and even though he may formally ignore or deny all divinity. The beauty he reveals is an aspect of the very Divine that he denies.

For certain qualities of beauty, Yeats will hardly find his equal among the poets of the world. It may be conceded that the three greatest poetical literatures in the world are the Greek, the Italian and the English; and one is inclined to hold that the last is the highest of the three, for its immense volume of pure poetry, for its variety, its richness, its humanity, its love of nature, its simplicity. In English literature there are many periods. The latest began a century ago. It was full of nature, as in Wordsworth; it was mystical, as in Coleridge; it had a wonderful new quality of music, as in Shelley. Shelley's profession of atheism, his views on anarchy and vegetarian diet, his love tragedies and desertions are grave enough in their way, yet they are really minor and insignificant in determining his final standing. The great matter is, that he created the modern music in verse. Even Shakespeare's ever varying beauty lacks this new and marvelous essence, this divine breath of living harmony.

From Shelley, the secret passed to Rossetti and Swinburne; and it is this quality of music which makes the great value of their work. In these latter days comes Yeats, who is the equal of Shelley in subtleness and beauty, and excels all three poets in the fineness of his rhythmic gift, weaving melodies of sound which for tone and vital quality have never been surpassed.

Fineness, purity, distinction, unerring choice of the right word, of the very vowel-sounds which best fit his tone-poem, are everywhere through his verses. One may find great instruction and delight in taking some verse, perhaps that quoted already, from the 'Lake Island of Inisfree,' and noting the real simplicity, in the pure artistic sense, with which he reaches his end. Try to substitute some like word for any adjective or noun or verb, so that the sense might remain much the same, and you will realize how perfect a choice the poet has already exercised, how many alternatives he has set aside, before gaining the exact note of beauty which he sought. Yet far beyond this verbal beauty is the beauty of rhythm, as in the closing verse :

' I will arise and go now, for always night and day
 I hear lake waters lapping with low sounds near the shore;
 While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,
 I hear it in the deep heart's core.'

One must linger over the vowel-sounds, hear their mingled harmony, and steep oneself in the rhythmic progression of the words, before the full beauty is perceived, the full measure of delight is gained. Then one will find that something wonderful is added to the fineness and remoteness of the mood, the subtle and delicate selection of words, and the beauty of the images, as of peace 'dropping from the veils of the morning.' There is an added music for the inner ear, which no other poet has so finely and constantly rendered.

These are the things in my old schoolmate's work which seem to me to give it enduring value : fineness, remoteness, purity, rhythmical beauty. Their value is in solace and delight; they draw us away from the harsh inconsistency and commonness of the actual, and bring us for a while to a harbor of ideal quietness and rest. And once we reach this thought, we shall note how incessantly the same thought inspires not only the style but the subject of Yeats's poems. He is always longing to draw himself back from the world, to escape, to go away. His Oisin wanders for centuries from this human life, into regions magical; in the 'Land

of Heart's Desire,' it is the same thing; the 'newly married bride' breaks away from the human world to 'a land where even the old are fair'; and in the most beautiful of the lyrics, the same thought haunts him: 'I will arise and go . .' Nor are his plays different in inspiration. 'Where there is Nothing' has the same motive, escape from the world, whether to the wandering tinker's liberty, or the ascetic's visions. In 'Cathleen Ni Hoolihan' it is the same. The Spirit of the People summons the youth from his family, on his marriage eve, and carries him away to some forlorn hope. It is always the same: to escape, to go away, to turn one's back on human life.

Here, it seems to me, is the poet's weakness, and when he seeks to pass from poet to teacher, in his prose writings, the weakness looms larger and more important. The problem of life may not so be solved. We may grow weary of pain, of sickness and sorrow; yet we cannot find rest and safety in escape. We must stay and fight it out, even if we are to fall fighting. Retreat, even if wreathed in colored clouds, is no solution.

The result of this mood, this eagerness to escape, shows in the theme of every poem. The loves and hates are cloudlike and mystical; the relations between the persons are vague, shadowy, unreal. There is no genuine sense of human life. In a certain sense, there is no genuine human love, no real friendship, no living sympathy. These delicate and lovely wreaths of music and color are, it is true, a solace and delight; they do rest and refresh us amid the harshness and commonness of life; but we take them merely in the lull of the combat, knowing that presently we shall return to the contest. They are not an evangel of life; they are merely a pretty pastime, while we rest and prepare for new struggles.

I should like to indicate the path by which Yeats came to this evangel; or rather, since it was in him from the beginning, to record the books and philosophies in which he thought, for a time, that he had found it expressed. But this would be work for a biography, and I can not do more than mark a few outlines.

After the sheer materialism of his Darwinian days, the first step was to the gentle agnostic view of his father, where the harsh facts of life were ignored in general sensibility to the fine influences of art and culture. The feeling of these things was held in the heart, and the mind, resting on them, turned away from direct questioning.

Then, at the end of 1884 and the beginning of 1885, came the Oriental epoch, when we saturated ourselves in the Wisdom of India, Yeats being one of the pioneers of a band of youthful philosophers. Here was a system which accepted Evolution, thus facing the facts of modern science; yet

which, in its large vision, in its inclusion of the soul, in its pictured splendors for the future, showed materialism as a partial thing, a half truth, an outworn fashion. It was one road of escape, and Yeats accepted much of the Oriental spirit, its vastness, its insistence on interior things, its belief that the world exists through the soul. Lines like these date from those Indian days :

‘ Swear by the parents of the gods,
Dread oath, who dwell on sacred Himalay,
On the far Golden Peak, enormous shapes,
Who still were old when the great sea was young;
On their vast faces mystery and dreams.’

These vague, dim imaginings were close kindred to him; yet it seems to me that, while finding much, Yeats missed the greater matter, the bearing of the Indian Wisdom on human life. He seems to me to have missed the intuition of humanity, and therefore the genuine inspiration of divinity. He contends for the invisible world, it is true; yet he fails to find the invisible human souls that people that world; he has never got beyond his own loneliness, to kindle his heart with the heart of another. Therefore I think that while his pathway of dreams leads away from the harshness of the actual, it yet does not lead to the real; nor, leaving the strand of this waking world, does he carry his bark to the shore of the immortal world, but rather wanders over the waves of that river of dreams which keeps the two worlds apart.

After the philosophy of India came the mysticism of Blake's Prophetic Books, modern Cabalism, and the symbolism of the French Decadents. Each has its peculiar quality of beauty or imagination; yet, it seems to me, they all have the same failing: a defective intuition of real human life, a failure to touch the invisible human soul, an imperfect inspiration and sense of divine life, of divine law and love, as that in which all the worlds rest.

Yet this is a lack for the teacher, rather than for the poet, the born musician in words. Here, the gift of Yeats is perfect and precious, a genuine solace and delight; here we can find rest and refreshment amid life's battles; here is a potion of dreams to lull us for awhile; here are mirages to hold the rapt vision, while from the soul's inward power we draw new strength for renewed battles, which must be fought to the end, battles from which we must not retreat nor escape, until the final victory be won.

EVOLUTION OF RELIGION

AS SUGGESTED IN BROWNING'S POEMS

By EMMA LIGHTNER HELLINGS

EVERYTHING in nature signifies growth. Nothing stands still. Progression or retrogression is as inevitable as life or death. From the positive aspect, survival is evidence of wider possibility. Advance must be made in consecutive degrees. This passing, step by step, from a lower to a higher; this progressive development, through a series of graduations—this is evolution. It moulds the present from the past and tends to shape the future. As a process, it is characterized by various stages. Each stage is marked by the operation of a certain factor. Of these factors, the first is *longing*; the second, *power of receptivity*; the third, *motive force*. As ordinarily manifested, each is respectively equivalent to aspiration, inclination, determination. These elements develop naturally one from another, just as each stage succeeds in its turn, the one to the other. Yearning marks the first step; susceptibility does not exist without it; while energy can result only from both. The best is obtained by the combined existence of each factor, since herein is laid a foundation for the higher development of all.

From a religious standpoint, evolution is a gradual expanding towards the infinite and controlling Spirit of the universe. It is this spiritual growth of which a master mind conceived. It is this conception by which a poet was inspired. In a word, it is this thought for which Robert Browning stands and for which three of his poems are destined to endure. These three poems mark successive stages in the evolution of religion. 'Cleon' expresses human longing, and consequently is indefinite, inconclusive. 'Saul' reveals a longing which prompts susceptibility, and hence is sensitive and impressionable. 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' manifests a longing and susceptibility enforced by motive power, and therefore is energetic and strenuous. From this aspect, we might say, 'Cleon' is neuter; 'Saul,' passive; 'Rabbi Ben Ezra,' active.

'Cleon' is a study of Greek thought at its zenith. The poem represents at once the acme of classic culture and civilization. Cleon's god was a power presiding over the universe, but unable to hold out any promise of a future after death. Christianity was at that time a new and rejected power. On the one hand was an intense hunger and thirst for immortality, on the other was the power which could have appeased that craving. But these

two existences were separate, distinct; and the one unknown to the other. Consequently the best and highest conception of the Greek mind is manifested in that unsatisfied yearning, with which Cleon, the poet, was saddened and tormented. It is significant that this very longing, which evinced the absence of spirituality, could, at the same time, almost confirm its existence. It was a longing that reached almost beyond itself, yet touched not the power which could respond. It was a longing, unreceptive, unimpelled.

This aspiration sprung from keen reasoning power, rather than from depth of feeling. The tone throughout is cool and argumentative, seldom emotional. Cleon meets the propositions of Protus with logic and philosophic thought. The first deduction points to the value of a composite mind and draws the inference that appreciation of all parts is better than creation of any one. From this, there follows an argument, which, had it been endorsed by power to influence and incite, would have lifted the veil and solved the mystery. Cleon reasons that 'imperfection' itself is proof of perfection hid, and that if perfection is hid to grace the after-time—then the future must hold a revelation. This is clearly a suggestion of immortality, conceived by the senses, refuted by unbelief. From this height of limitation, there is a natural reversion of thought and of truth. If a longing for conscious, intro-active power could prompt nothing more—then the yearning itself must bring suffering; and progress means failure. Finally all ends with the most pathetic touch in the whole poem. Along with the joy-hunger, the soul-thirst, comes the falling hair, the shaking hand. Over the awakened senses creeps a dark and eternal sleep.

'I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over-much,
Sleep in my urn.'

If the Greeks were not spiritual they were at least esthetic; hence a love for the beautiful permeates the whole poem and unmistakably marks the national characteristic. Cleon's own reference to the 'sprinkled isles' suggests all the exquisite beauty that surrounded and nourished the Greek nature. From the portico, royal with sunset—to the little fishing-bark with lights at prow; from the chequered-work pavement with its settle-down of doves—to the wild flower; from the shell, the fish, the bird—to the fountain-Naiad; from the youth with muscles all a-ripple—to the songs of Sappho or the plays of *Æschylus*—everything, all, is beauty. And it is the beauty of nature and of art combined and blended into a perfect and harmonious union. It was by this love of nature and art that Cleon's noblest aspirations were awakened. The laws of nature pointed to the survival of external beauty; hence must there not be for man some happy possibility in the hereafter of death?

'I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability . . .
But no!
Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
He must have done so were it possible.'

From this insatiable longing of the Greek, we are carried now to an Hebraic revelation of susceptibility. In 'Saul,' even external nature is at once receptive to a pervading influence. Each change in the king's condition is reflected in the natural environments. The torturing heat of the desert and the awful blackness within the tent, first introduce the agony and intensity of Saul's strange passion. Then when the groan of separation betokens the first sign of consciousness, the whole tent shakes and quivers, as if touched by a gigantic hand. Later on, the sound of his name arouses the stupefied senses; and once more a long shudder thrills the tent; the air tingles, and Saul stands before us, recovered from sleep, yet not fully awake. At last, as he slowly resumes the old motions and habitudes, the muscles relax their grip, until Saul, the king, sits with David, the harper; looks kindly but gravely into that young face, scrutinizes its eyes, and pushes his fingers through the 'gracious gold hair.' They meet face to face, heart to heart. No song now is needed. All the love of creation unfolds love divine.

But even more are David's thoughts and feelings relieved by the nature setting. Himself a shepherd, all the familiar scenes and associations of pastoral life were ever fresh and beautiful in his memory. As he had lain near the flocks and gazed at the solitary eagle wheeling slowly through the depths above, as he had watched the assault of spring upon those rugged, seam-rent mountains, as he had looked upon the paper-reeds waving and tossing in the wind—all these moments of the past are the hours of the present. The aged lion crouched in his lair, the dates ripening to a golden yellow, the pitcher steeped with locust-flesh—all these sights, once seen, are the fancies now before him. When all else is forgotten, when new thoughts fail and nothing seems to charm the listless ear of Saul—then it is that the dreams of the shepherd-boy open the 'flood-skirts' of the spirit. And, finally, after the revelation has been given, its truth and beauty are effectively and significantly enforced by the peace and repose into which all nature reclines—'The earth sank to rest.'

David's character is sensitive and impressionable. Love for Saul awakened an overwhelming desire to snatch from him the ruin of this life, and to lead him towards a life everlasting and infinite beyond. In this case, however, yearning is accompanied by susceptibility. David can give only a vague hint of immortality; yet he has the faith and receptive power to be-

lieve and declare that what is wanting, though unknown, can exist. Throughout the poem is revealed a longing for the Messiah; a yearning for the Word to be made flesh. The advent of the new dispensation is prophesied. While the law of the Old is respected, the love of the New is foreshadowed. But this inclination towards spiritual truth is passively manifested. There is simply the acceptance of faith with no vitality to generate further knowledge. David's creed is well summarized in his own words:

'Tis not what man Does which exalts
Him, but what he Would do !'

This poem marks a step much in advance of Cleon; yet, even here, the perfect balance is lost by a complete absence of motive power.

If 'Saul' was passive, 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' is at once active. Just as the thought of 'Cleon' was advanced in 'Saul,' so the fundamental truths of each are embodied and advanced in this poem. The yearning of Cleon, the receptivity of Saul, are here supplemented by an impelling power. All three poems confirm the evolution of religion. Hence, it is evident that from this standpoint, 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' marks a higher point than either of the others. Considering this fact, it is significant that here, more perhaps than before, the principle of evolution is directly referred to. And each time the reference seems to convey the idea that a combined existence of the three essential elements, does not mean perfection. Truly speaking, the highest conception of evolution acknowledges no perfection. Therefore, while this poem embodies, no doubt, the best idea of evolution from a human aspect, it certainly points to the eternal possibility of expansion.

As a whole, this poem runs the gamut of life from youth to age. The hopes and fears of youth are prized and commended. From the experimental stage we are gradually conducted to a period in which knowledge gained, shall effect its end; until, after the brief suspension of a reviewing time, the threshold of the infinite is crossed and the vestibule of eternal existence revealed.

It is interesting to notice that Hebraic thought is often directly opposed to the classic. For instance, in the conception of youth and age, is a striking contrast. The Greek really knew of no future; hence to him death was black and awful. Therefore it was natural that he should rejoice in the beauty of youth, and reject the encroachment of age. On the other hand, the Hebrew, in faith, foresaw a future and hence was relieved and stimulated through life; so that to him, death did not mean oblivion, but rather perpetuation. This difference of thought is responsible for many opposing views of life. It was Cleon who affirmed that

'Most progress is most failure.'

It was Rabbi Ben Ezra who virtually declared that failure was success.

Again for the Greek, life served to embody his ideal. For the Hebrew, life was inadequate to express his best. The Greek loved beauty at his nearest approach to truth. The Hebrew first loved truth so far as he could recognize it.

Cleon rejects; Saul acknowledges; 'Rabbi Ben Ezra' accepts. Yet a certain noble spirituality can be foreshadowed in the first; is developed in the second; and embodied in the last. These poems are wonderful creations. Science and religion are represented. The Modern World can read them and respond.

AMIEL'S GARDEN

BY GERTRUDE HUNTINGTON McGIFFERT

HIS garden! His shining candelabra trees
En fete! His lilacs steeped in joy! His sky
Limpid and blue! The same flecked shadows lie
Athwart this path he paced. His reveries
Float in the air. His moods, his ecstasies
Still linger charmed. Pale butterflies flit by—
Were one his soul it had not found on high
Banquet more choice than those infinities
He daily knew. And now no one to hear
The hours hover, the grasses sing, to feel
'The wrinkles of the soul smooth out,' to see
God's shadow bend down from eternity.
His garden empty! Yet I gently steal
Lest I disturb his dreams still smiling near.

HOLY DAY PRAYERS

BY CHARLOTTE PORTER

GOD - of Light, God - of Joy! Kindle my gaze! —
So it dart, arrowy, threading the maze
Glooming, confusing my soul's right and rash
Gleam to Thy Heaven it sees in one flash!

God - of Light, God - of Joy! Bless thou my bliss
Arrogance, shrivel! — lest mar I or miss
Joy of heart - joy in the sudden capture —
Sharing on earth here the human rapture.

A THEATRICAL EVENT IN HAVANA

By FREDERIC M. NOA

TORN as Cuba has been, during the whole of the last past year by the feverish excitement of a hotly contested Presidential campaign, it was a very happy as well as patriotic thought of the veteran Cuban actor Senor D. Pablo Pildain recently to place upon the stage, in the historic Tacon, or, as now rechristened, the National Theatre of Havana, the tragedy of Avellaneda, the greatest dramatist of Cuba. Senor Pildain, the incorruptible veteran actor of lofty ideals, who, like Sir Henry Irving and Joseph Jefferson, has steadfastly stood for the elevation of the stage, was well sustained by an excellent company and achieved a remarkable triumph.

Forty-five years previously, in that very Tacon Theatre, the gifted Avellaneda, returning to her native Cuba after an absence of twenty-three years in Spain, was publicly crowned with a golden wreath of laurel.

Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda, born in the pastoral city of Camaguey, Central Cuba, in 1814, and dying in Spain in 1873, won the friendship of the noted Spanish critic and novelist Juan Valera, the republican poet Jose Zorrilla, the bizarre writer Hartzenbusch, and the brilliant *literati* of Madrid who shone with such lustre during the turbulent reign of the late Queen Isabella II. Among Avellaneda's many dramas none is finer than her tragedy 'Baltasar,' first performed in Madrid in 1858, and which had a successful run of thirty consecutive nights, an unprecedented record in those days.

This drama is on an exceptionally grand and heroic scale, and, in its four acts of stately and sonorous verse, swiftly carries the spectator from one startling crisis to another until the awful retribution of the wrath of God overwhelms King Belshazzar and wicked Babylon. The last sovereign of the doomed Babylonian monarchy is a volcanic, arbitrary despot, sceptical, satiated with luxury, pomp, flattery and power, prone to let his wild brutal passions run riot with him, yet, capable of being roused to acts of generosity and noble heroism. His mother, Nitocris, is a woman of fine qualities who is constantly appealing to his better nature and endeavoring to make him the beloved ruler and benefactor

of the subjects of his vast empire. Her efforts are constantly thwarted by the false Rabsares, an ambitious and thoroughly selfish courtier.

King Belshazzar appears to be the absolute and irresponsible arbiter of the destinies of countless subjects and slaves. The aged, feeble and blind Jehoikim, the captive ex-king of Judea, lies helpless in a Babylonian dungeon, solaced by the tender solicitude of a young girl of sixteen, Elda, the niece of Daniel, the Hebrew prophet, and the betrothed of Ruben, the grandson of Jehoikim. Her pious devotion has reached the ears of Nitocris, who repairs to the prison, promises Jehoikim to intercede with her mighty son to secure not only his liberation but that of all the captive Jews, and commands that Elda shall attend her at the court of Babylon as her own maid of honor. This well suits the secret designs of the false courtier Rabsares, but Elda prepares to leave the prison with strange forebodings of evil. A touching love scene between her and Ruben follows, the latter being utterly unable to understand why she should be in tears and despair at what seems to him a sudden and happy change in their fortunes. The venerable Jehoikim now enters, bids them return thanks to the God of the Hebrews for the mercies He has extended to them, makes them solemnly swear to be ever faithful to the chosen people of the Lord Jehovah, and unites the kneeling pair in marriage.

At the close of this ceremony, the courtier Rabsares appears, with slaves bearing rich presents for Elda. He announces that the illustrious Queen Mother Nitocris requires her instant attendance at King Belshazzar's court. With Jehoikim's blessing, and a parting embrace from Ruben, she reluctantly leaves the prison, escorted by Rabsares and the slaves.

The next scene introduces Daniel, the Hebrew prophet, into the prison. He anxiously inquires about his niece Elda, and is horrified when he learns that she has been taken away to King Belshazzar's court. He then unfolds the crafty plot of Rabsares. For a long time, the king of Babylon had grown so satiated with adulation, pomp and luxury that he had lapsed into a state of absolute indifference to his surroundings. The most beautiful women from all parts of his extensive domains had filled his royal harem, but he turned away, in wearied disgust, from their charms. There were, however, many girls of surpassing loveliness among the captive daughters of the Jews, and the plan was now to endeavor to arouse him from his fatal lethargy by bringing Elda into his presence.

Daniel's revelations fill both Jehoikim and Ruben with anguish and dismay. The latter rushes out, exclaiming that he will save his

bride, while Daniel solemnly raises his hands to heaven and, advancing to the centre of the stage, utters the following brief invocation :

Let thy voice, O King of Kings,
Thy austere commands decree !
I, my cause, entrust to Thee,
For only Thou art really great !

With this climax, the first act closes.

At the opening of the second act, the splendid perfume-laden gardens of the palace of Babylon are seen, with sumptuous thrones on the right for the king and his mother, while in the background women magnificently attired are attuning musical instruments, weaving garlands, and burning incense in golden jars.

It is Nitocris the queen mother and Rabsares the courtier who now enter. They engage in a conversation which skilfully contrasts the character of each. Rabsares is the smooth courtier, versed in Oriental flattery, who lauds to the skies the virtues and good deeds of the queen, especially commanding her for her successful intercession with her royal son in obtaining the liberation of the aged Jehoikim, the blind ex-king of Judea, and less harsh treatment of the Jews residing in Babylon. Nitocris is, however, far too sensible to be misled by such oily words, and so pointedly hints at Rabsares's perfidious nature that he fears that she has penetrated his treacherous designs. He assures her that the reported discontent of the satraps and governors of various provinces of the Babylonian empire is really nothing and that the rumored uprising of the Medes and Persians, if they have dared to be so bold, will be quickly suppressed with the utmost severity. Nitocris replies that perhaps her fears are unfounded. As regards the little good she may have been able to do, it is amply repaid by the affection which the noble and tender Elda has shown towards her. Rabsares answers that he has taken care to bring her to her side, and that the queen mother must lay aside fears that are unworthy of her royal soul, as her son, King Belshazzar, is approaching. On hearing these words, Nitocris declares that she must be the first to salute the king. She leaves just as Neregel, a minister, profoundly bowing, enters.

A very brief dialogue between Neregel and Rabsares ensues, the latter assuring his fellow-conspirator that Elda is extremely beautiful and that she is even now in the retinue of the court and will be presented to King Belshazzar. Elda, accompanied by her companions, now enters, and

inquires where Nitocris, her benefactress, may be found. Rabsares replies that she is approaching, at that very instant, with her august son and his royal court, and cautions her to remember that, at a mere gesture of mighty Belshazzar, the chains of the wretched Hebrew captives may be broken. Elda answers that she bows to the sovereign will of God.

In the next scene, which is very imposing, King Belshazzar and Nitocris enter, preceded by a long retinue of courtiers and slaves, who completely fill both sides of the stage, where the queen's ladies are also stationed. In the background, are seen the king's female slaves, as he enters. Ruben, disguised in Babylonian costume, has mingled with the royal retinue.

Elda, as she is moving towards the left to receive Nitocris, recognizes Ruben, and a very brief but lively dialogue, in whispered tones, follows. She then rejoins her companions, but Neregel, the minister, has noticed her conversing with Ruben, and informs Rabsares who is by his side. The latter, however, is absorbed in his reflections, and feels satisfied at seeing Elda in court. Meanwhile, Ruben has concealed himself in the king's retinue. Neregel, in the flowery language of the Orient, now addresses himself to the wives of the king, and bids them engage in music and dancing. There is now heard a soft music played on zitherns, harps and other instruments by female slaves, while others scatter incense and perfume, and still others begin voluptuous dances, weaving, at the same time, garlands of flowers, which they lay at the feet of King Belshazzar. The king advances with his mother as a beautiful hymn, full of fulsome praise, is being sung. All present bow profoundly as Belshazzar and Nitocris advance to their thrones.

Much skill is now shown in portraying the utter weariness and disgust of King Belshazzar, absolute ruler over countless subjects, at the abject servility displayed towards him, and the pompous flattery of which he is the recipient. He orders the music and dancing stopped, bids the women, with their garlands of flowers, to withdraw, and tells Rabsares that so much incense simply nauseates him. He inquires whether there is not something new in the world, whether there is not some great, noble and good sovereign whose example he may emulate: — in short, whether it is not possible to find some being or some one thing greater than the vast world and empire over which he rules: somebody loftier than himself.

While his confused ministers, Neregel and Rabsares, are indulging in their accustomed adulation, Nitocris strives to rouse in her royal son high ideals of his duties towards the subjects whose welfare and happy-

ness lie in his hands, but circumstances have made King Belshazzar a thorough sceptic and pessimist, and he suddenly announces that he resigns all his power into the hands of Nitocris herself. It is then that the smooth courtier Rabsares says that there are people among the captive Jews who excel in music, and he points out Elda to the monarch, bidding her, with her exquisite voice, dispel the sad thoughts of the king. Nitocris adds her special entreaty, but Elda replies that she cannot use the psalter and sing, owing to the captivity of her race, God's chosen people. Birds alone, singing even when caged, may entertain their oppressor. Judea now has no altar to the living God, her broken harp hangs on a willow by the banks of the Euphrates, her laments are heard in the solitude of a foreign land, and thought can find no wings where liberty is lacking.

Elda's bold language rivets the attention of mighty Belshazzar, who has all his life been accustomed to blind obedience. He regards her with astonishment, not unmixed with respect. The entire court is thoroughly scandalized, and even the good queen mother fears that the young Hebrew maiden is sealing her own doom. In answer to Belshazzar's question:—'Does not that Jewish crowd know that the voice of their king is a sacred law?' Elda replies that they see in him their conqueror, but do not acknowledge him as their king. She is deaf to entreaties to bend the knee before Belshazzar, an earthly sovereign, as the Lord Jehovah may alone claim that right. Nitocris and Rabsares, fearing the worst from the haughty, uncontrollable Babylonian monarch, implore the king to overlook Elda's rashness, and to remember that her father, Jehoikim, the venerable ex-king of Judea, lies helpless and blind in a dungeon, and has surely been sufficiently punished. Elda exclaims that his enemy, with impious fury, had wholly deprived him of the light of day. Her daring wins Belshazzar's admiration, who commands his chief minister instantly to set Jehoikim free and provide him with every comfort and a suitable yearly income. Nitocris is rejoiced that mercy has won the day, while the false Rabsares feels that Belshazzar has fallen in love, and that his secret plotting will now succeed. The grateful Elda is preparing to follow her benefactress Nitocris, in order to communicate the news to him whom she regards as her father, when the king orders her to remain, as he is anxious to speak with her alone. He commands all the retinue and court to withdraw at once. Ruben, who, it will be recalled, is the grandson of the aged Jehoikim, and now Elda's husband, lingers after all have left, and mutters that if he were to listen to the dictates of righteous wrath —

'Belshazzar. Why are you tarrying? Why do you delay obeying me?

Elda. Oh! . . .

Ruben. Nothing shall . . .

Belshazzar. Leave instantly.

Ruben (aside). I shall not go far.'

The interview which ensues between Belshazzar and Elda, between the absolute monarch whose imperious will recognizes no law, human or divine, and the Jewish maiden, who has no earthly protector, is developed and woven with stirring art. King Belshazzar tells Elda that she has won favor in the sight of her sovereign. Her beauty and spirit captivate his hitherto adamantine heart, and she may demand whatever gifts and privileges she desires. To his utter amazement, Elda spurns the dazzling treasures he offers to lay at her feet. The king of Babylon may command her dutiful obedience in temporal matters, but never in those of the spirit. Belshazzar, who thinks that she is artfully exciting his lustful passions and will ultimately yield, warns her not to impose too far upon his indulgence, but to remember that she, his slave, shall be his supreme favorite in his harem. With burning indignation, she bids him respect the misfortune of a lonely, exiled, forsaken daughter of Judea, and to beware of insulting her, as there is a power, before which his own sinks into insignificance, that will surely protect her helpless innocence. King Belshazzar, in ungovernable fury, seizes her by the arm and inquires where that power, superior to his own, can be found. 'Where, O mad woman! is that mighty one you invoke? What can save you who have converted my favor into wrath? Who is there that does not acknowledge my supreme will? Who will hasten to rescue you from my vehement desires?'

The king has no sooner put this last question than, in answer to it, Ruben rushes in between the two. 'It is I, despot, who will save her!' Ruben's sudden appearance and exclamation fill Elda with mingled hope and dread, while Belshazzar, for some moments, is speechless with amazement. As soon as he recovers himself, he inquires who that raving maniac is. Ruben replies that he is a man, deprived of his native country, of wealth, glory, power, bereft of everything by the emissaries of the tyrant, but who has jealously guarded a deep hatred which maintains his own existence and threatens that of the king. Belshazzar glances towards the side whence his entire court recently withdrew, while Ruben taunts him as a coward, seeking in vain for the aid of that crowd of slaves and women who lately surrounded him. Elda entreats Ruben to pause in

his wild rashness. The king asks him whether he knows who he is. Ruben answers that he is perfectly aware that Belshazzar is a ruthless despot who dishonors the diadem he wears, that he, the Babylonian monarch, has become satiated with boundless power, luxury, women and slavish subjects, and drunk with absolute sway over a vast empire, blasphemous that God by whose permission sovereigns are permitted to reign, and who can annihilate oppressors that rule only over degraded hordes of humanity.

It is while this dramatic scene is going on that Rabsares and some of the courtiers return, but, astonished at what they are hearing, they remain for an instant undecided what to do, then they prepare to rush upon the daring Ruben. Meanwhile, Belshazzar draws his sword on Ruben, but pauses when the latter presents to him his naked breast. Elda interposes to save her lover and husband, but Ruben defies both Belshazzar and his horde of servile tools to strike and bury a hundred blades in his bosom. A swift feeling of joy seizes Belshazzar at finding that he has at last discovered one man who dares to dispute his hitherto unquestioned sway. Rabsares and his followers are now rushing, with drawn swords, upon Ruben, when, in a voice of thunder, Belshazzar commands that nobody shall touch him. A long pause ensues, which is broken by the king asking who that man Ruben is. Rabsares replies that he is the son of the Jew whose chains were mercifully broken by command of Belshazzar himself. Is Ruben, then, inquires Belshazzar, the brother of the Hebrew maiden before him? Elda, perceiving an avenue of escape, eagerly answers yes, and implores the king to be merciful, to overlook Ruben's rash actions, and to recall that harsh fate has robbed him of everything. 'Not, however, of virtue and valor,' Ruben interrupts. Elda declares that she alone is the cause of his criminal excesses, and hence, let the heaviest weight of the king's chastising fall on her only.

Rabsares now turns to Belshazzar and tells him that he awaits his royal commands. 'Take that female slave to my harem,' orders the monarch. Elda utters a cry of despair, and falls in a dead faint as some of the courtiers are bearing her away. Ruben, trembling with rage, rushes forward towards Elda, but Belshazzar firmly holds him back, and orders all the courtiers and guards instantly to leave. Rabsares hesitates, but, with an imperious gesture, Belshazzar repeats his command, and is finally left alone with Ruben.

Face to face now with Ruben, the king feels a hitherto unknown and terrible joy, for, at last, he has found a man who dares to defy him

in his own palace. He bids his adversary defend himself, for, woe to the man whom he shall attack and whose weakness proves him, after all, to be nothing but a slave. Belshazzar then impetuously rushes upon Ruben, who, being confused, unprepared, and blinded by his own rage and amazement, is instantly and easily disarmed. The king points to Ruben's fallen sword and tells him to pick it up. The latter refuses and presents his bared breast. Let Belshazzar kill him, as God, in His inscrutable providence, grants him that right. The monarch of Babylon answers, with bitter irony, that Ruben now sees how things are. Yonder just God of the Hebrews, who has ordained everything in His wisdom, has decreed that the lamb shall be the prey of the lion; the kite, of the eagle; the defenceless dove, of the kite. This entire world, the stupendous work of his master hand, reveals everywhere the inexorable law that the strong shall devour the weak; the great, the humble; the rich, the wretched; and, in a word, this explains Ruben's fate and that of the king himself. 'Kill me, then!' exclaims Ruben. King Belshazzar replies that he shall not do so, and that he pardons him; as he is indebted to him for more than he has ever derived from all his grandeur, from the world, and from his regal throne. Here, at length, he experienced an emotion, here, he felt his being aflame with consuming fury. Ah! how much he enjoyed it! Let not Ruben be amazed, since he himself has finally succeeded, with a strange sensation of happiness, in forgetting that he is a king, owing to the fact that he now feels that he is a man. With the words:—'You are free,' Belshazzar withdraws and Ruben finds himself alone.

Ruben, in despair at the humiliation of being pardoned by the king, raises his sword to kill himself, but remembers that he is not master of the life which God gave him. His grandfather, the venerable blind Jehoikim, ex-king of Judea, enters meanwhile. Jehoikim, who has been liberated from prison by order of Belshazzar, calls upon both Elda and Ruben to return thanks to the Lord Jehovah of the Hebrews for having turned bitter misfortune and sorrow into joy and happiness. As he hears no response, he inquires where Elda is. Dismayed at Ruben's silence, he takes hold of his hand and notices that it trembles. He implores Ruben to speak and reproaches him with brutality for keeping him in ignorance as to the whereabouts of his adored daughter. Ruben, in despair, tells his grandfather to go in search of her, and he shall find her lost and deflowered. All is lost, and he will hurl to the ground the sword with which he was unable to protect her from the infamous harem of King Belshazzar. Jehoikim asks what then is to become of Elda. He himself will hasten

and throw himself at the feet of the monarch: perhaps the latter will have pity and respect his white hairs, but, — if he should not do so? Ah! then, with sorrow as his guide, he will find a way to reach the king's stony heart. Where is that sword? He gropes over the ground until he holds the sword in his hands. Now it is his own.

'Grant, O righteous God, one single ray of light!' he exclaims. He passes his hand across his eyes as though endeavoring to dispel the eternal veil of darkness that covers them, and then gloomily adds: — 'Deep night! horrifying night! Never may it be! Even hate itself cannot illumine me!' — Then, with a sudden resolution, he continues: — 'Ah! nothing shall hinder me! I shall find some way!'

As Jehoikim, with faltering steps and outstretched trembling hands, is endeavoring to find an exit, Daniel, the Hebrew prophet, appears, and holding him back, says, in a commanding voice: —

'No! "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord. "I will repay!"'

Jehoikim falls on his knees, and the loosened sword lies at the feet of the prophet.

The third act opens in the magnificent salon of King Belshazzar's harem. Neregel, the king's minister, and Rabsares, the false courtier, are seen engaged in earnest conversation. The substance of the dialogue is to the effect that Neregel is terrified at the plans of Rabsares, for the Jewish female slave Elda will now have supreme influence over their sovereign, and the stiff-necked, discontented Hebrew captives of Judea are greatly to be feared. Rabsares tells him to lay aside his fears, as he has carefully calculated everything. Elda's stubborn virtue will rouse passions and energy in the king, and Belshazzar, engrossed in the delights of a newly found love, will forget all about the responsibilities of the Babylonian empire. As for his rival, Ruben, the king believes that the latter is Elda's brother. The one person really to be dreaded is the noble and good-hearted queen-mother Nitocris, and it is her influence which must be undermined if the secret schemes of Rabsares and his fellow intriguers are to succeed. Neregel answers that he perceives Belshazzar approaching. He will, therefore, leave him alone with the monarch.

In the audience which Rabsares now has with the king, he perceives that a great change has come over Belshazzar, who has lost his former lethargy and indifference, and, on the contrary, rejoices in the beauty of nature, the heavens and the world. Rabsares feels that, his sovereign having found a new passion and source of delight, he himself may manage the affairs of the Babylonian empire to suit his own ambitious projects,

but his exultation suddenly ceases when the king announces that he has intense satisfaction in having met with two strong wills, two souls, in a woman and a slave, who do not bow down before him at a gesture, and that Ruben and his father, blind Jehoikim, shall be brought into the antechamber of his royal harem. Rabsares protests that strangers have never been permitted to profane, with their vile presence, the sacred harem. Belshazzar commands that he be instantly obeyed. Hereafter, within the palace walls, oppression and terror shall be banished, and Elda shall reign supreme, as Belshazzar's queen, before whom all his nobles and courtiers shall prostrate themselves. Rabsares warns the king that the maiden is a daughter of those stubborn Hebrew captives who worship a God unknown and hostile to the Babylonians, and who regard it as a disgrace to enter into any alliance or social contract outside of their own race. Let, then, Elda be left alone in the quiet and solitude of the inmost sanctuary of the harem, and she will by and by fly into the sovereign's arms, and he may then enjoy her loveliness. Belshazzar sternly replies that one woman more or less in the harem does not concern him: that he cares no longer for female physical charms; that it is a *soul* for which he now yearns. Her father and brother shall, therefore, appear at once. The confused Rabsares is leaving to obey Belshazzar's orders, when Neregel enters, and he whispers to him to say all he can against the Jews. Neregel replies that he has come for that very purpose.

The king is about to go into an inner chamber, when Neregel detains him and informs him that the people of Babylon are disturbed and much alarmed at vague rumors that Cyrus, at the head of the Medes and Persians, is in arms and advancing in perfect order and silence towards Babylon. The king haughtily inquires whether his minister has simply come to pour silly tales into his ears. Neregel replies that there is still further cause for anxiety, as the Hebrew captives, he is ashamed to relate, possess certain books which they highly venerate and guard with the most jealous care, and in which the speedy destruction of the vast Babylonian empire is foretold. This prophecy is having a very bad effect upon the people, and the various satraps of the provinces are showing themselves disaffected. Belshazzar answers that all this is an idle dream, that he will have, that very night, a splendid banquet in the palace, and thus make the turbulent satraps forget their discontent. As for his subjects, he will impose a new tribute tomorrow. Neregel urges the king to impose a severe punishment upon the troublesome Jewish captives. King Belshazzar brushes this request aside by suddenly inquiring how many gods have temples and altars in Babylon. The confused minister replies that

there are so many that he has never counted them. The most sumptuous temple is that of Baal. True enough, is the monarch's bitter retort, and that temple was built at a fearful cost, the hard-wrung tribute of a hundred provinces. Well, then, it would cost very much less to provide the Hebrews with altars for their god, and such a move would make them satisfied with Babylonian rule. Neregel is horrified at the bare suggestion, and solemnly asks the king whether he really believes in the power of that deity of the Jewish exiles. Belshazzar ironically says that he does most assuredly; he believes in that god quite as much as in the gods of Babylon. Neregel now does not know what to answer. Perhaps there are as many as a hundred gods in the capital. 'Well,' remarks Belshazzar, 'if that is so, why not have one hundred and one; the burden will be no heavier to bear.' Neregel, now thoroughly alarmed, reminds his sovereign that the latter's royal ancestors all waged eternal war against the God of the Jews. 'My illustrious royal ancestors were a set of arrant fools,' cynically retorts the king. He will not listen to Neregel's last despairing supplication, but commands, from that very day, that the god of his own beautiful female slave shall be associated with the old Chaldean deities. 'Go instantly,' he adds, 'and publish my decree.' The terrified minister, murmuring to himself that the king's command is a sacrilege, bows and withdraws. Belshazzar, now being left alone, glances towards the interior of the harem, and exclaims:— 'It is she! She is coming here. She shall see how complete is her triumph!'

It is indeed Elda who now appears.

In the interval since Elda first met him, King Belshazzar's demeanor and attitude towards her have entirely changed. He no longer regards her as a physically beautiful slave, putting on a semblance of virtue and artfully exciting his most violent lustful passions, only to yield ultimately to his impure desires. On the contrary, he is now filled with admiration of her nobility of character, and is making a sincere effort to be worthy of the love and respect of a spiritual being such as he has never before known in his pampered, insincere and empty life.

He solemnly promises her to grant her whatever she may demand. Her people the Jews shall be protected from the insults of the rabble of Babylon:— the altar and temple of her God Jehovah shall be restored, so that the Hebrews may worship according to their consciences. In return, he asks of her nothing but the gift of a high, free soul.

The astonished and grateful Elda now tells him that his ancestors have been the oppressors and scourges of humanity, but that he may become mightier than any of them by loving his subjects as a father does

his children, and by devoting his energies towards improving their condition. Belshazzar, in his turn, listens to her in amazement, for, to love the millions of crouching slaves over whom he is absolute ruler appears incomprehensible to him. It begins, however, to dawn upon him that virtue and self-sacrifice can alone make both him and them happy. It shall be as Elda commands. She shall have an immediate proof of how complete her sway over him is. A while ago, she was a slave; now, she is free, and the two beings dearest to her shall be instantly brought into her presence. As the king speaks these last words, the door opens, and Rabsares is seen ushering blind Jehoikim, leaning on the arm of Ruben. Belshazzar leaves at the very moment that Elda throws herself impetuously into Jehoikim's arms.

As may be imagined, the next, extremely brief scene is a touching and affectionate reunion. All three recognize that the king has a noble nature, and they pledge one another that they will gratefully appreciate his kindness and clemency. Even as they are speaking, Belshazzar returns, holding a document in his hand, which he is reading. Almost at the same instant, however, of his reappearance, distant, confused cries and shouts of the people are heard, who are already angrily assembling outside, in front of the palace gates. The monarch of Babylon, paying no heed to what may be going on outside of his castle and palace, bids the kneeling Ruben rise, and declares that, if he, the king, is the lordly lion of the forest, he can also show himself generous. Let the past be blotted out since Belshazzar has found a man, instead of a slave, in Ruben, and he shall be the highest ruler in the Babylonian empire, next to the king himself. As for Jehoikim, the former ex-king of Judea, he shall select some pleasant, quiet abode, where he shall be surrounded by every comfort. The latter thanks Belshazzar but expresses his desire that he may spend the few remaining days of his troubled life in a humble hut in his own Palestine. Ruben and Elda add their earnest supplications that, together with the venerable Jehoikim, they may depart at once for their native country Judea.

The uproar of the populace outside the palace is, meantime, growing louder and louder, and Jehoikim implores Belshazzar to grant them, the sad Jewish captives, so hated by the Babylonians, leave to set out on their journey at once. King Belshazzar notes with growing surprise and indignation the still distant clamors of his subjects beyond the palace walls. 'Wait!' he commands, as Neregel, his prime minister, enters in the greatest agitation.

Belshazzar imperiously demands what is the meaning of the clamor

and uproar of his subjects whom he and his long line of royal ancestors have ever ruled with an iron hand. Neregel replies that the people are infuriated, not only that those two Hebrews who attempted to commit a terrible crime against the sovereign of Babylon are harbored in the palace, but also are enraged that, by command of Belshazzar himself, the god of the captive Jews is to have an altar and temple in the midst of the hundred deities of proud Babylon. They demand the blood of Jehoikim and Ruben. What, then, are the king's commands? Belshazzar answers that the people be admitted into the salon of the harem itself. Elda, in terror clinging to Ruben, her husband, asks the sovereign what he intends doing. 'All the people of Babylon shall enter,' is the reply, 'and render homage to my royal consort, a maiden of Judea. She shall wear the purple mantle of renowned Semiramis herself.' Jehoikim, with a shudder of horror, says that what Belshazzar proposes is impossible. Ruben indignantly hurls at the latter's feet the written decree he has just received from the king, appointing him the second in command in Babylon. He wants none of his favors, since they must be bought by his wife becoming the concubine of King Belshazzar. Jehoikim, anxious to smooth over matters, adds that he supposes that the king is not unaware that Elda is married to Ruben.

It is at this point that one of the greatest climaxes of the drama occurs. Jehoikim's unintentional indiscretion obliges Elda to confess that she lied when she told the king that Ruben was her brother, but she implores Belshazzar to remember his sacred promises, and prove by his acts the nobility of his character. Blind, feeble Jehoikim, as well as Ruben, urge him to be noble, merciful and generous. The king of Babylon, who all his life has been surrounded by fawning, duplicity and intrigue, feels wounded to the quick. He had hoped at last to find in Elda and Ruben two souls who would never utter a lie to him. Yet even they fail him. The new idols he had set up are broken.

Belshazzar, now mastered by conflicting, tempestuous passions, summons his soldiers and hurling her into their arms, tells her that she shall return to prison, and that her shame shall avenge him for his own foolish, mad illusions. Poor Jehoikim endeavors to save her whom he loves as his own daughter, while Ruben exclaims that his own body shall be first torn to pieces before the king shall execute his impious threat.

At this moment, through the opened doors, at the back of the stage, the Babylonian mob enter the antechamber, uttering menacing cries and murmurs. Elda, desperately struggling with the guards, implores the king not to dishonor himself before the people over whom he rules. Bel-

shazzar, in ungovernable fury, exclaims to the mob that they are demanding a prey of him to appease their own rage. Very well, then, before them stands Ruben. Let them take that Jew. Belshazzar thrusts Ruben towards the rabble, who seize him with savage joy, and at once the king leaves the scene. There follows a terrible effort on the part of Jehoikim, Elda and Ruben to save themselves, after which Elda faints away and is borne off by the soldiers. The minister Neregel then turns to the populace, drunk with wild rage and joy, bids them tear the infamous Ruben to pieces, and tells them to hurl his bloody remains into the palace courtyard. Many voices shout: — 'Let him perish!' Blind Jehoikim feebly endeavors to shield him and then falls unconscious in the centre of the scene just as the Queen Mother Nitocris appears and vainly strives to save the victim from the clutches of the mob.

With this climax, the third act of Avellaneda's tragedy ends.

The fourth act, which is to mark the culmination of the plot, opens in the indescribably splendid banqueting hall of the sovereigns of Babylon. In the front part of the stage, on the right, is a rich divan, occupied by the king as the curtain rises. In the centre, there is a large semicircular table, set for the banquet. Aromatic perfumes are burning in vessels of gold and silver, and, on the walls, many warlike trophies are seen, adorned with garlands of flowers. This grand salon is separated from the terrace by a column of pillars, beyond which are outlined the statues and fountains of the celebrated hanging garden, which serves as a background to the scene, while, still further, against an inky, cloudy sky, appear the cupolas and towers of Babylon, lighted up, from time to time, by sinister lightning flashes. These become more frequent as the act advances, while distant rumbling of thunder is heard just as the third scene is drawing to a conclusion, being mingled, at the same time, with the echoes of music played in the garden.

At the beginning of the act, Belshazzar and Nitocris are engaged in earnest conversation. The former seems to have been a prey to sombre reflections, and starts, as from a nightmare, at the first words of the queen-mother who, entering just as the curtain rises, slowly and silently approaches him. Nitocris speaks first. Her tender heart has been torn by the terrible scene she has just witnessed, when she vainly endeavored to save Ruben, the innocent victim of the mob's fury. She can accomplish no further good, and she therefore resigns the power lately conferred upon her by the monarch. The entire scene reveals the pathetic love of a mother who longs to infuse the highest ideals into her royal son, and the pitiable condition of mighty Belshazzar, who finds all happiness and hope

gone, and who, in order to drown his bitter, desolate sorrow, orders that there shall be a sumptuous banquet that very night. Whatever he decrees shall be carried out, sadly answers Nitocris, who now withdraws, while, through another door, Neregel enters. The latter announces that the stubborn Hebrew magician Daniel insists upon speaking with the king himself. Belshazzar inquires for what purpose and learns with dismay that it is probably in behalf of that young Jewish girl whose mind seems to be giving way, as she is raving about her husband, and, in her wild imagination, trying to save him from countless dangers. Bitter indeed has become the cup which Belshazzar must now drain to the dregs, but he commands that feverish preparations be made for the banquet, for he will drown his troubles in an orgy of wine, women and music. Neregel bows and hastens to execute his commands.

While Belshazzar, in a wild outburst of despair, is exclaiming that it matters not now what happens, since the beautiful Elda is insane, and he is about to leave the scene, he is suddenly confronted with Daniel, the Hebrew prophet. The interview between haughty Belshazzar and the despised prophet of the captive Jews is wrought with consummate art.

Daniel denies that he is a powerful magician; he is only the humble servant of the one true and omnipotent God, who rewards virtue and punishes crime. Belshazzar sarcastically retorts that Daniel's God is impotent, as vice and wrong rule the world, and the hopeless condition of the captive Jews is a striking proof of how powerless their boasted God is to rescue them. Daniel warns the king not to blaspheme the Most High, maker of heaven and earth. It is true that the monarchs of Babylon have been permitted to humiliate Judea and the Jews, but God so willed it as a terrible chastisement for the impiety of the Jews themselves. The Lord Jehovah, however, has now commissioned him, Daniel, to warn the monarch of Babylon that Cyrus the Persian shall rise against him, invade his extensive empire with a mighty army, take and destroy Babylon itself, and that Belshazzar shall perish from the face of the earth. God, in His inscrutable wisdom, may permit wickedness to flourish, but, at His own appointed time, he will bring on cataclysms to purge the earth of entrenched vice and wrong and oppression. King Belshazzar retorts that he fears not the puny god of the Hebrews, whom he himself may set free at a breath, or utterly annihilate. The helpless captives of Judea shall feel the weight of his power. Daniel admonishes the monarch that he cannot destroy the Hebrews, who are the chosen people of God, and who are destined, for all time, to survive, as a shining example to the world.

'We shall see,' retorts Belshazzar. He summons Neregel and his

royal body guard, and commands that Daniel be thrust into a dungeon, while tomorrow the entire Jewish population of Babylon shall bow down before those whom they dare to call idols, and, if they attempt to resist, they shall all be cut off by the sword.

'Now then,' ironically exclaims Belshazzar, 'let the mighty hand of your God come to your rescue!' Having thus spoken, he withdraws by one door, while Daniel is being led off by another. Daniel casts one glance of compassion on Belshazzar, then the stage is left vacant for a moment while the strains of music begin, mingling with which, at intervals, peals of thunder are heard.

In the next scene, there are present Nitocris, Rabsares, various satraps and magi, and the women of the king who are constantly entering on the stage. The conversation is carried on between Nitocris and the several satraps and magi. Nitocris announces that her royal son will soon honor them with his presence at the banquet where science united with the nobility of the court shall assemble. It quickly becomes evident that these dignitaries and priests are plotting against the good queen, although their words are full of honeyed flattery. She inquires of the magi what is the significance and import of the ever increasingly threatening black skies with their terrible peals of thunder. The answer is that Baal, the chief god of Babylon, decrees that far more magnificent temples and altars than even those existing shall be erected. All the magi assent to this, and their leader adds, aside, that he hopes to be appointed the high priest of the empire. Nitocris turns towards the first satrap and inquires of him how he is governing his vast satrapy. He has a ready reply of its prospering more and more every day. The queen tells him that she hears rumors of deep-seated complaints and that armed risings are already taking place in his province. The satrap assures her that she need have no fear, because of a few malcontents, whom he will load down with tributes and exactions.

As this conversation is going on, the king is seen approaching, and all exclaim:—'Glory to King Belshazzar!' They bow profoundly as the king enters with Neregel. Slaves now wait at the grand banqueting table while the music, issuing from the garden, is blending with the thunder of the tempest, the claps and peals growing more frequent and prolonged.

The king, whose sombre, forbidding aspect casts a gloom over the whole company, declares that here, in the banqueting hall, boundless joy, and tumultuous, frenzied pleasures shall prevail. He then commands all to sit down round the table, he himself taking his place at the head, while, at the farther end, he indicates that his mother shall sit.

The bowls and cups are now filled with the choicest wine of Cyprus, a divine nectar, while Rabsares, raising a glass to his lips, exclaims:— 'To the health of the mighty King Belshazzar!' 'Yes,' repeats the principal magician:— 'we drink to the god Belshazzar!' 'Now let Babylon,' adds the first satrap, 'have its burning desire gratified, by quickly raising an altar to him!'

As some of the company are shouting:— 'Glory to the great king!' and others 'Glory to our god!' the banquet is suddenly interrupted by the appearance of Elda, who enters on the right, with her hair disheveled, her dress disarranged, and her entire aspect plainly showing that she is insane.

This scene, where the raving mad Elda interrupts the banquet, is one of the finest of the entire drama. The horror of all is vividly depicted according to the disposition of each individual. Nitocris, the queen mother, is filled with the deepest compassion. Belshazzar casts one dark glance of angry reproach on the courtier Rabsares, who humbly admits that Elda has unexpectedly escaped from the harem. Neregel would have her instantly removed by force from the hall, and all the company rise as he offers to do so, some of the banqueters even venturing near to where she stands. Belshazzar bids his mother take care of her. At the sound of the voice of Nitocris, Elda recognizes her and clings to her as to a protectress. The demented girl sees in her fevered imagination the cruel delivery of Ruben, her husband, into the clutches of the infuriated Babylonian mob, who rend him to pieces. She piteously implores Nitocris to save and rescue him. It may not, however, be.

Belshazzar himself is touched at her fearful distress, but, as the king approaches her, her insanity takes on a new form. It is no longer merely the delirium of an overwrought and disordered brain, but rather a prophecy inspired by God himself. She pictures the rapidly approaching destruction of Babylon itself, the proud capital consumed by flames, a thousand yawning graves, one vast cemetery of desolation and blood. Then her mind reverts to her own hapless, untimely widowhood. She is and shall remain pure and undefiled. Will the tyrant have no compassion on her innocence? With a shriek, she runs, calling on Ruben and her father to rescue her; then, suddenly recognizing the king, who has advanced to impose silence upon her, she draws back and exclaims:— 'No!! It is too late! Too late!' With these words, Elda falls exhausted upon the floor. Nitocris bends over her, while Belshazzar orders her to be taken away. Rabsares and two slaves obey.

There follows a moment of dreadful silence, then, as Nitocris is sadly

reproaching Belshazzar, Neregel says that the merry festival has been long enough disturbed by the apparition of that insane woman. The king, with a tremendous effort, and with feverish animation, replies that it is true. Let the exciting wine flow anew, and let him and the whole court drink ceaselessly until the sun shall rise and dispel the dark mantle of night.

He and the company gather again around the table, but without sitting down, although they lift up their cups. The principal satrap says that he will propose a new toast, if the king will permit. Belshazzar tells him to do so. Very well, then, the toast shall be in honor of the poor raving mad Hebrew girl who arrived so opportunely to increase the seductive disorder of the banquet.

They are all raising up their glasses, when the feeble, venerable Jehoikim, his countenance frightfully distorted, confronts them. He advances, with tottering steps, through the same door by which his dying daughter has just been taken away.

Jehoikim has come, he declares, also to drink to the glory of the haughty king of Babylon, for the latter's joys would be incomplete unless they could gloat over the sorrows of his torn heart. Let the drinking and orgies go on, then, for Belshazzar is the grandson of Nimrod, the idol of a people before whom the earth trembles. What does it matter that virtue, justice and liberty are trampled under foot, since Belshazzar denies the existence of the Judge of the Universe, and maintains that everything is governed by brute force. The king bids Jehoikim stop, but the latter continues that Belshazzar greatly errs, for, before the Lord Jehovah, the tyrant and the slave are on an equal footing, and are brothers, and His supreme judgment is now pronounced, through Jehoikim's voice, against the king himself.

Belshazzar cynically replies that he accepts the challenge, and in order to pay him the highest homage he will drink a toast to that great God of Jacob. Let the sacred vessels that belonged to the Temple of Solomon be brought in at once, Jehoikim, horrified, asks Belshazzar what he means. The king answers that he intends to show Jehoikim the value of that high toast. He commands him to drink from one of the sacred vessels which he holds to his lips. Jehoikim firmly refuses, and warns the sacrilegious king to tremble. Belshazzar, in a ringing tone of derision, raises the cup to his own lips and exclaims: — 'To the health of the King of Kings, before whom I myself am summoned !'

At that very moment, as all the intoxicated courtiers are raising their cups to their lips, and indulging in loud, coarse laughter, a sudden gust of

violent wind opens all the doors and windows of the royal banqueting hall, the statues being thrown down from their pedestals and all the lights being instantaneously extinguished. The music ceases; the sacred vessels fall from the nerveless hands of the sacrilegious king and courtiers; while, in the midst of the pitch darkness and the general stupor, a peal of thunder, louder than any yet heard, crashes over their heads, and directly in front of them there appears, in letters of fire, the celebrated historical handwriting on the wall: — '*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upbarsin.*' All, in the utmost consternation, withdraw from the table.

In the frightful dread which seizes the king and his court, Nitocris is the first to recover sufficiently to inquire of the learned magi whether any of them can interpret the four strange words. Each, in turn, confesses his inability to solve the enigma. Nitocris then says that, during the lifetime of Belshazzar's father, there was a man versed in occult sciences who explained an intricate dream to the king's glorious father. Belshazzar answers that she means Daniel, whom he himself lately ordered thrown into a vile dungeon. Let Daniel be brought immediately into his presence, and if he can truly interpret those four words, whether their import be good or fatal, he, the king, will clothe him in his royal purple mantle and grant whatever he may demand.

Daniel, the Hebrew prophet, accompanied by Neregel with slaves bearing large blazing torches of wood, now enters. He tells the king to state what he wants of him. Belshazzar, in a trembling voice, entreats him to interpret the handwriting on the wall, and he will confer rich honors upon him. Daniel bids him keep his gifts, for it is his duty to make the meaning of the four mysterious words known to the king. Nitocris feels an awful foreboding as Daniel remains silent for a moment and then solemnly speaks as follows: — 'God has weighed thy righteousness in the balance and found it wanting, and has marked the limit of thy career. That crown of thine, which thou wearest so proudly, shall be snatched from thee by a foreign hand. Thy immense monarchy, burdened with centuries of crime, is at length expiating its sanguinary power. It shall be destroyed and be divided between the Medes and Persians.'

When Daniel has finished speaking, Nitocris and some of the king's high priests and officials recognize the interpretation as expressing the retributive judgment of the one living God, but others regard it as an imposture, and Neregel suggests that Daniel be instantly killed. Belshazzar, with grandeur, commands silence: he has given a sacred promise which shall immediately be kept. He takes off his purple robe, and, throwing it into the hands of Neregel, orders it to be placed upon the

shoulders of the Jewish slave. Daniel rejects it, saying that Cyrus is arriving to claim it. Belshazzar replies that he still possesses it. Let Daniel demand whatever he will, and his desires shall be gratified, but, if that very night the prophecy is not fulfilled, the new dawn shall not find a single vestige of the people of Zion left.

The tragedy now rapidly draws towards its conclusion. Rabsares hastily enters, telling the king that he must arm himself instantly, as Cyrus has diverted the bed of the river Euphrates, and is at the city's gates with a countless and well-disciplined army. Nitocris implores Belshazzar no longer to provoke the wrath of God, but he orders all the women to be withdrawn to their quarters, and prepares to lead what he knows to be a forlorn hope. He will still be the mighty sovereign of Babylon, even in the midst of disaster, and though both God and man forsake him.

While the battle is raging between the besieging Persians and the hopelessly hemmed in Babylonian army, Nitocris entreats Daniel to ward off impending destruction from her son, but the latter, though touched at her pathetic appeals, tells her that he is powerless to change the decrees of the Almighty, and she must make her prayers direct to God. Meanwhile, the clashing of arms, and the groans of the wounded and dying grow louder and louder. Suddenly Rabsares enters, disarmed and in abject terror. He informs the queen that Belshazzar is utterly routed and mortally wounded. He himself will save his own life. Let Nitocris do the same. She, however, has the heroic royal blood of her ancestors and will bare her bosom to the victorious swords of the enemy. Daniel bids her desist, as her dying son is now entering, borne by Neregel and two slaves with lighted torches.

Belshazzar, in his dying address, first acknowledges the power and existence of the living, righteous God. Then he begs Jehoikim to forgive him. The latter answers that his religion makes it a duty to forgive, and may the king, therefore, die in peace. Belshazzar, feeling that his last moment is at hand, says that he is indeed dying, 'but the truth shines on forever! That God who really ennobles man, that God is alone the true one!' As he is making a supreme effort to confess to God, he falls lifeless in his mother's arms.

Nitocris, bending over her son's body, exclaims that she shall protect it from desecration, and that she herself will not live to witness the triumph of the Assyrian invader and new sovereign. She seizes a torch from one of the slaves and retires with it into an inner room of the palace.

Jehoikim advises Daniel to follow her example and save himself. The Hebrew prophet advances towards the centre of the stage, and, filled with inspiration, announces that Cyrus has been chosen by the Lord Jehovah to execute His divine decrees, that the captives of Judea shall be restored to their native land, that they shall rear a temple surpassing in splendor that of Solomon, and that the voice of the Messiah, the appointed one, the Christ and Savior of the world, shall one day be heard there.

Just as Jehoikim falls on his knees in an attitude of adoration and transport, Nitocris, who has already thrown down the torch, which sets fire to the palace, reenters, and bids them flee whilst they may. She will remain with the cold remains of Belshazzar, for now the impious victors can no longer profane the mansion of the sovereigns of Babylon.

As she throws herself upon her son's corpse, the devouring flames burst forth, while the Persian and Median conquerors appear, in the background, illuminated by the conflagration.

From the foregoing summary, one may perceive upon what a lofty and heroic plane Avellaneda has constructed her powerful drama. Wherever the sonorous Castilian language is spoken, among sixty to seventy million inhabitants, she is hailed as the 'Tenth Muse,' and given the title of 'The Cuban Shakespeare.'

It was indeed fortunate, in the recent performance, in Havana, of her tragedy 'Baltasar,' that the part of the heroic last king of Babylon was assumed by the veteran Cuban actor Señor Pablo Pildain. He has had a most varied experience on the stage, during more than forty years, in both comedy and tragedy. His early training was under the world-renowned Spanish actors Teodora Lamadrid, Joaquin Arijona, Emilio Mario and Rafael Calvo. His engagements carried him, four seasons, on a triumphal tour, to Mexico City, Vera Cruz, Puebla and all the centres of culture in the Mexican Republic, as well as twice to Porto Rico. It is little more than a year ago that he made a tremendous sensation in Havana, as the fantastic, half-human, half-supernatural King Sigismund in Calderon de la Barca's celebrated comedy:—'La Vida Es Sueño' ('Life is a Dream').

One of the most marked characteristics of Pildain is his earnest and thorough preparation for anything he undertakes. His whole life has been devoted to severe practice. He has studied the entire dramatic work of the illustrious Spanish playwright Echegaray, who, it will be recalled, was awarded, last spring, one of the coveted Nobel prizes. Exceptionally gifted as an actor and an artist, he is in his prime at the age of fifty-seven, and bids fair to achieve many triumphs during years to come.

LIFE AND LETTERS

SHOULD Poetry have a 'commercial value,' anyway? That is the question. Two very good friends of *Poet Lore* wrote a letter or so to each other recently. And the first one happened to say, in the course of her letter, that she found writing poems such joy—the one thing best likable in life—that when she got money for her poems, besides, it seemed a delightful superfluity of good fortune—the rose-leaf on a brimful cup, as it were.

* * *

THEREFORE, in replying, her correspondent said :

'It is true that money for one's verses should be considered a quite superfluous fortune—or is it only half true? And isn't it also true that one must feel sometimes that if they are really worth something they ought to prove themselves so, even in the world of the commercial measures of value? . . . I'm not sure about this—and I am sure that one thing is wholly and supremely true—that the one greatest joy of life is to write them, the one thing that surely makes living worth while (for the one who can do that one thing). But then afterward, it's a great help to know that other people think them worth while, and perhaps especially so that they should prove it by that queer and quite unrelated (I admit), but yet very convincing method of actually paying for them!

'You ought to have a "Symposium on the Commercial Values of Poetry"!—wouldn't it be an appropriate way, in this fine and after all pretty sensible worldly world, of calling attention to the fact that poetry has "values" at all? I feel moved to write for the "Contributor's Club" of the *Atlantic* on that subject—and to exploit my theory (this one is only half true, I know, at the most—but maintainable) that the poet ought also to be an efficient commercial person, both in all ways, and especially in disposing of his own wares!—to prove himself a whole and well-rounded man!

'That's one of my moods!—and the complementary one is to hate and detest ever sending anything to a magazine at all—and I don't send the things I really care about (though *Poet Lore* has one of them, the "Lady of Tripoli"), but am saving them till they really are finished and go together rightly, in my two volumes—after I'm dead!'

* * *

THEN the writer who first touched the moot-subject took fire and wrote back a little tempestuously, thus :

'Yes, it is true, ideally, but practically it is not. People ought to want poems, and, therefore, pay for them. But they don't. That is, on any durable level with their want of articles on X-rays and Roosevelt

and meat-packing and the Automobile Show. O, I know—and so must you—that there is poetry enough, like gold awaiting the exploiter, heaps of it, ore and slag and refuse together mixed, in just these current things of life and above all in the People's desire of them; but, the People don't.

'Hence the Poets of latent power to show this forth, the Poets potential in this dear land of ours, who understand the People and modern life (not so as to put the crudity, of course, but the breath and promise of it in their Poetry) do not meet, at all, or they have not yet met.

'For just as the most advanced scientific persons you and I meet amaze us by their old-fashioned notions of literature, their utter blindness to what their special devotion should make them quick to see, one would think, *i.e.*, the spirit of the modern in the poetry of the Poet who feels it, so the *Populus* that reads the popular magazines likes its poetry to be quite beneath its intellectual and sensational level in other subjects. That is, it likes its poetry to be either banal or artificial, either homespun or newspaperese, the "When I was so happy and so poor" kind; the trivial and humorous variety for "Editors' Drawers" and "Lighter Veins," or else the old-fashioned weakly sentimental sort, adroitly done in carefully imitative metres, slightly reminiscent to their readers' imperfect memories of the dead poets whose "Works" they buy and shelve. At least the Publishers say there is always a sale for "standard poets," and so steady a sale that it is not quite a negligible quantity, even in comparison with the "best-selling" but soon-dead fiction-produce. Moreover, all the shekels that come in for these "standards" is "net"; so they will publish readily attractive editions of what they would hesitate to publish with royalties subtracted, and with risk added, for a living author.

'Not—let me hasten to say—that I don't appreciate that which is good of its kind and worth while in the homespun, the trivial, and the smoothly dextrous, although not potent verse, that does get printed in the magazines, but just because I do appreciate it at its proper lesser value, therefore do I deplore the fact that there is so little of the stronger vintage kept on tap.

'I don't believe it is not written. I do believe it may be scarce. It is timid, too,—of editors. But I think we do not get it because, as some magazine editors will tell you, they do not and cannot publish to suit ideal tastes—not even their own—but they do publish what they suppose will suit the public taste. And, moreover, they try to suit the bulk of their subscription-list—not the picked members of it.

'All of this means, as I look at it, do what you can to kill the widespread idea, that poetry is the pap or the ginger ale instead of the wine of life.

'The idea that is sapping its vitality is the idea that it has nothing to

do with the depth and strength of the intensest present living, but must perforce address itself to the primer capacity or the picnic mind, and that the emotionalized intelligence must be avoided in verse as if it were the plague.

‘So then, while we get our poems in magazines by hook or by crook, let us only send those to the mart that come in our mind’s way, as suited to this or that market, or to try it on; but don’t let us devote ourselves to suiting it, for that way the bones lie thick. Don’t let us become identified with the prosaicizing tendency and its patent processes, but write for ourselves. Yes, for *Poet Lore*, too, if it be true that it has a different judgment bar, or, at least, seeks to have. So, in due time, it may be that a goodly company may be grown of poets who dare take up a modernness of theme and method, suited to the spirit of the time, with mastery of metrical effects in technique, and without the guilt of having ineffectively and deterioratingly sought the usual channels with minds and hearts subdued to the materialism of the time.

‘I mean, of course, that we must seek to master the Time. It is, “after all,” as you say, “a pretty sensible world”; but don’t let it enslave us.

‘I think myself, that the American Poet who don’t love his own Time with all its faults, better than any other, except the future that may splendidly grow out of it, is not worthy of being an American Poet.’

* * *

MAETERLINCK’s ‘*Monna Vanna*’ was acted, in Yokohama, in February, at the Meiji theatre, and with extraordinary sympathy and spirit. So says May Crawford Fraser in the *Japan Weekly Mail*.

Madame Sada Yakko’s acting of Vanna was full of the most exquisite womanly tenderness and strength. She radiates purity. Kawakami, who played Marco, in voice and gesture, put before the eye the wisdom and the wise patience of age with the heats of youth. Fujisawa’s Guido, it is said, presented the traditional face and figure of the splendid historical family of the Calonna, whose latest descendant in Rome today might be taken for a brother of this Japanese actor. The fine pride and fire of the acting of Guido was counterbalanced by an almost equally convincing personation of Prinzivalle.

* * *

WHETHER, in being translated into Japanese, the story was a little Japanned, is not clear, or whether the correspondent who gives this interesting account of the performance was not familiar with the original, and did not quite follow the acting. But certainly one or the other must be true, for the plot varies curiously from Maeterlinck’s in that it presents Prinzivalle as one whose ‘storm of passion on meeting Vanna is calmed,’

not by the depth of his own pure love being made aware of its purity in her presence, but by 'her woman's wit,' she 'leading' him on from one sweet memory to another and taming him. Of course, in Maeterlinck's play, these sweet memories of their childhood together are really opened by Prinzivalle, and Vanna's leading of him is entirely spiritual because of his unique and perfect love of her, and not in the least is it due to a contrived taming of him on her part. The purity of her nature has its direct effect upon him, but it acts through the medium of their innate sympathy, and by virtue of the exclusive passion for her to which his whole soul is loyally devoted.

Again the Japanese Vanna is represented as abandoning the truth in the last act, and purposely lying when Guido's spiritual obtuseness forces her to do so, merely in order to save Prinzivalle's life, and with no idea of responding to the unique love that has proven its supremacy. The declaration of the inner truth of her own love for the lover whose superior nobility is made clear to her by contrast with Guido's low-mindedness, which is the spiritual climax of Maeterlinck's final situation in the last act, is apparently quite missed or left out in the Japanese version. Instead of Maeterlinck's splendidly dramatic double action, blind to Guido, but clear to Marco, by which she binds Prinzivalle for the dungeon and for vengeance, while she murmurs to him 'I belong to thee, I love thee! Let me chain you. I shall deliver you! I shall be your keeper! We shall escape!—instead of all this, the Japanese Vanna seeks merely to save him from Guido's wrath, and, moreover, all in vain. For all this splendor of a justified spiritual love is made ineffective by Vanna's death. 'Her strength,' writes the correspondent for Yokohama, is now 'at an end. As Prinzivalle is led away to prison she staggers after him, crying out that she alone must have the key to his dungeon. But Vanna is dying. As she sinks down, Guido eyes her with cold fury, while the people she has saved are still rejoicing noisily in the street. Her sacrifice is complete.'

* * *

PERHAPS to the Japanese such a sacrifice of the final situation and the inner purport of the original is necessitated by the Oriental code of ideas as to woman. 'Monna Vanna' may be too European to be enacted in its integrity. If so, this presentation of the play in Yokohama is the more notable, for the drama intact will certainly find its own way in Japan ultimately after this opening. The text itself will set right and undo in the minds of Japanese thinkers and Japanese women a representation over-awed by Japanese traditions, and less bold than the truth of human nature. For a pure and noble woman's heart in such a crisis as Maeterlinck imagines for Monna Vanna, would assert itself as righteously as Monna Vanna's did.

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